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# The Disputation between a Muslim and a Monk of Bēt Ḥālē: Syriac Text and Annotated English Translation

Martin Tamcke's prolific bibliography is notable for his focus on the Church of the East and for a series of influential studies of this church's long history of dialogue with others, whether local Christian rivals, Muslim scholars, Mongolian shamans, or Lutheran missionaries. His own professional life in Göttingen, where he is Director of Intercultural Theology within the Faculty of Theology, is also distinguished by his remarkable commitment to bringing different ethnic and religious groups into constructive dialogue within a supportive environment. It is a great pleasure, therefore, to offer my honoured colleague this edition of an early example of the Church of the East's engagement with Islam as a token of my respect and appreciation for his own work.

## Introduction

The "Disputation between a Muslim and a monk of Bēt Ḥālē" (henceforth *Disputation*) has been much discussed in recent secondary literature on early Christian-Muslim relations,[1] but the lack of a published edition and full translation has re-

1 For an excellent summary see B. Roggema, "The Disputation between a monk of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab notable", in D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1 (600–900)*, (Leiden, 2009), p. 268–273. See also the ground-breaking articles of S.H. Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian texts. From Patriarch John (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)", in B. Lewis and F. Niewöhner (eds), *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1992), p. 251–273; id., "Disputing with Islam in Syriac: The Case of the Monk of Bêt Hālê and a Muslim Emir", *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3:1 (2000); and G.J. Reinink, "The beginnings of Syriac apologetic literature in response to Islam", *Oriens Christianus* 77 (1993), p. 165–187; id., "Political power and right religion in the East Syrian disputation between a monk of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab Notable", in E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, and D. Thomas (eds), *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam* (Leiden, 2006), p. 153–169; id., "From Apocalyptics to Apologetics: Early Syriac Reactions to Islam", in W. Brandes and F. Schmeider (eds), *Endzeiten: Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen* (Berlin, 2008) p. 75–87; id., "The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs in an early East Syrian apology against Islam", in D. Bumazhnov, E. Grypeou, T.B. Sailors and A. Toepel (eds), *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65.*

stricted its substantive analysis to those with access to images of the one extant Syriac manuscript, and has left all others dependent upon scholarly summaries of its contents. Various editions have been promised, but none have appeared, and as a result my own transcription and translation, originally prepared for my students in Oxford, have been circulating more and more widely. This article seeks to make this important text openly available to all who have an interest in the subject of early Christian-Muslim dialogue.

## Origins and Date of the *Disputation*

The *Disputation* presents itself as an account (sent as a letter to one Father Jacob for the benefit of his brethren) of an informal discussion held in the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē between an anonymous monk (who later redacted the discussion, in the form of questions and answers) and an anonymous notable Muslim who is said to have served the emir Maslama. With the dismissal of the Muslim's translator (§ 4), the conversation is presumably thought to have been continued in Arabic, although the report is written in Syriac. Their discussion covers many issues, including the question of the theological significance of the Islamic conquests; fidelity to the commandments of Abraham (notably circumcision and sacrifice); Christ's divinity and suffering; the Trinity; the status and teaching of Muḥammad; Christian use of crosses, images, and relics; Christian prayer towards the East; and the ability of Muslims to enter the Kingdom of God. Arguments depend heavily on scriptural exegesis and proofs from nature, rather than on more philosophical argumentation.

The *Disputation* is a Christian text, with no attempt made to outline or defend core Islamic beliefs, and so it inevitably ends with the Muslim conceding intellectual defeat. And yet the tone of the debate remains remarkably positive. The monk describes Muḥammad as "a wise and God-fearing man, who freed you (i.e. the Muslims) from the worship of demons, and caused you to know the one true God" (§ 32). This clearly falls short of Islamic teaching, and yet avoids the bitterness of much Christian polemic. The monk refers to the Qurʾān and what he believes to be its constituent parts (§ 48), and engages with citations from it (§ 29–30).[2] He also

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*Geburtstag* (OLA 187; Leuven, 2011) p. 329–342; R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton, 1997), p. 465–472. Needless to say, I am indebted throughout the article and edition that follows to these earlier works.

2 See G.J. Reinink, "Bible and Qurʾan in early Syriac Christian-Islamic disputation", in M. Tamcke (ed.), *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages* (Beirut,

states that righteous Muslims will be admitted to the Kingdom of God, albeit with a lesser status than Christians (§ 58). The Muslim, who is described from the outset as being "well educated in our Scriptures and their Qur'ān" (§ 2), accepts proof texts from the Old Testament, and makes use of a Christian tradition concerning the image of Christ sent to King Abgar of Edessa (§ 47). He acknowledges the diligence of the Christians in prayer and fasting (§ 3), quotes the Prophet's praise of monks (§ 53), and states that God will not reject Christians who are free of sin (§ 53).

There is little reason to suppose that this text provides a record of an actual historical discussion, but, as often with Christian apologetic texts, it does reflect real points of debate between Christians and Muslims, and seeks to provide polished (if unsophisticated) Christian answers to questions about their beliefs and practices. Whether a contemporary Muslim would have found them persuasive is an entirely different question.

The denominational origins of the *Disputation* are clear, not only from the fact that it is attributed in its title to a monk of the Church of the East monastery of Bēt Ḥālē, and is only preserved in East Syriac manuscripts, but also from the title "blessed" (and only "blessed") given to Mary (§ 30), the words of the Eucharistic institution (§ 26) which appear to reflect those of the East Syriac liturgical anaphora of Nestorius, and the reliance on the *Acts of Mar Mari* (§ 46–47). More general Syriac origins are indicated by arguments based on biblical citations taken from the Peshiṭta, the regular use of Syriac exegetical traditions, and dependence on the *Legend of Sergius Baḥira*[3] and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.[4]

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2007), p. 57–72.

3 For the question of dependence see below. The early 9th century legend exists in both an East and a West Syriac tradition. It is cited below from the edition and translation, with critical study, of B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden, 2009). For a concise overview see B. Roggema, "The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā", in D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1 (600–900)*, (Leiden, 2009), p. 600–603. See also K. Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the monk. The making of the Christian Baḥīrā legend", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), p. 169–214; R.G. Hoyland, "The earliest Christian writings on Muḥammad. An appraisal", in H. Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad. The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden, 2000), p. 276–97.

4 This text was of West Syriac origin, and was composed around 691/2. In addition to early translations into Greek and thence into Latin, it also circulated in the Church of the East at an early date – though the *Disputation* is itself an important piece of evidence for the date of this circulation. For an overview see L. Greisiger, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Syriac)", in Thomas and Roggema (eds), *Christian-Muslim Relations 1 (600–900)*, p. 163–171. Citations below are to the critical edition and translation of G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 540, 541: Leuven, 1993).

There is far less certainty about the dating of the *Disputation*. The monastery to which the monk is said to belong (in the title only) is that of Bēt Ḥālē. There are two known monasteries of this name, both belonging to the Church of the East. The first, also known by the Arabic form of its name as Dair aṭ Ṭīn, was in the north of Iraq, in Adiabene on the banks of the Tigris, just below the confluence of the Great Zab, and very close to Ḥadīta.[5] It only appears in the historical record between 754 and 780, at which point it clashed with the church hierarchy.[6] The second monastery of this name, and by far the most famous of the two, was located much further south, in Bēt Aramāyē, in the desert north-west of Ḥīra and Kūfa.[7] It was founded by Rabban Mar Ḫūdāhwi (ܚܘܕܝܐܒ ܪܒܐ ܡܪ) in the mid-7th century,[8] on a spot said to have been revealed in a divine vision seventy years earlier, before Ḫūdāhwi's birth, to Mar Babai the Scribe who lived nearby in a cave. After the founding of the monastery, Mar Ḫūdāhwi transported the remains of Mar Babai and his disciple Mar ʿAbdā the elder and reburied them there, and hence the two other names of his foundation, the monastery of Mar ʿAbdā, and the monastery of Maʿarrē ("the caves"). The monastery of Bēt Ḥālē appears to have survived until at least the 11th century, and produced many famous monks who became monastic founders and leaders.[9] Its traditions also link it and its spiritual forebears to the Umayyad rulers. Ḫūdāhwi's teacher, Mar ʿAbdā the younger, is said to have healed ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 686), an Umayyad governor of Baṣra and Kūfa, who later visited the saint's tomb to give thanks for his healing and to offer gifts to the monks,[10] and Ḫūdāhwi himself is said to have healed the withered arm of the daughter of Muʿāwiyah ibn ʾAbī Sufyān (602–680), the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, by baptising her.[11] It thus seems most likely that the *Disputation* presents itself as having taken place in this latter monastery, in the desert of Ḥīra.

The earliest known reference to the *Disputation* is to be found in the 13th-cen-

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**5** J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne. Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq,* vol. I (Beirut, 1965), p. 102.

**6** See E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Margâ A.D. 840* (London, 1893), IV.5, Syr. p. 198–199, 201, Eng. p. 385–387, 391; J.B. Abbeloos and T.J. Lamy, *Gregorii Barhebræi Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, vol. 3 (Louvain, 1877), col. 165–172.

**7** J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne III. Bét Garmaï, Bét Aramāyé et Maišān nestoriens* (Beirut, 1968), p. 221–223.

**8** See A. Scher and R. Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert)* II.2 (PO 13.4; Paris, 1919), p. 546–550 [226–230], 586–595 [266–275]; J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Le Livre de la Chasteté composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Baçrah* (Rome, 1896), § 74–76, 78.

**9** See Chabot (ed.), *Le Livre de la Chasteté,* § 79–87.

**10** Scher and Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert)* II.2, p. 589 [269].

**11** Scher and Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert)* II.2, p. 594 [274].

tury catalogue of Syriac literature which was written in verse by ʿAbdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318).[12] His laconic entry reads: "and Abraham of Bēt Ḥālē, a disputation against the Muslims (*ṭayāyē*)".[13] While it is possible that this refers to a different text, this seems unlikely. This is the only source for the attribution of the *Disputation* to an author named Abraham. Unfortunately Abraham is not a very distinctive name among Syriac monks, and so not only is it unclear whether the name was found by ʿAbdisho in the manuscript tradition or was his own attribution to a famed monk of the monastery, but which Abraham this might be, in either case, is also uncertain. The *Chronicle of Siirt* refers[14] to one Abraham of Ḥīra who was a companion of Mar Ḫūdāhwi and helped Mar ʿAbdā the younger to build the monastery of Gamrē, and the *Book of Chastity* mentions[15] another Abraham from the monastery who was a friend of Mar Yoḥannan the Blue (*zrōqā*/*azraq*) who later became bishop of Ḥīra (late 7th/early 8th century),[16] and who rebuilt a monastery near Baghdad. Either of these could have been possible contenders for ʿAbdisho, but he may of course have had no more certainty about the identity of the supposed author than we do. His entry for the *Disputation* is sandwiched between those for John of Bēt Garmai (late 7th/early 8th century)[17] – who is credited with writing, among other works, the life of Mar Ḫūdāhwi – and Solomon of Ḥadīta (second half of the 8th century)[18] who was taken prisoner by the second Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775) and imprisoned in the other, northern, monastery of Bēt Ḥālē for three years. So ʿAbdisho seems to have dated the text to the mid-8th century, unless he or his source was simply clustering authors linked to (a conflated) Bēt Ḥālē.

ʿAbdisho's dating may simply, of course, have been due to the mention in the text of "the emir Maslama". He is usually (and most plausibly) identified with the

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**12** J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 3.1 (Rome, 1725), p. 205; Y. Habbi, *Abdišoʿ of Sob († 318), Catalogus Auctorum* (Baghdad, 1986), p. 110, line 929–930. See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922), p. 211.

**13** ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܒܝܬ ܚܠܐ ܕܥܒܪ ܥܠ ܡܚܘܬܐ ܥܡ ܛܝܝܐ.

**14** Scher and Griveau (eds), *Histoire nestorienne inédite: (Chronique de Séert)* II.2, p. 586–587 [266–267].

**15** Chabot (ed.), *Le Livre de la Chasteté*, § 83.

**16** Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne III*, p. 123.

**17** See Baumstark, *Geschichte*, p. 203–204; Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 3.1, p .203; Budge, *Book of Governors*, I.31 (Syr. p. 58–59, Eng. p. 101–103).

**18** See Baumstark, *Geschichte*, p. 214; Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. 3.1, p. 205–210; Budge, *Book of Governors*, IV.5/7 (Syr. p. 198–199, 201, Eng. p. 385–387, 391); H. Gismondi (ed.), *Maris Amri et Slibae De patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria* (4 vols.; Rome, 1896–1899), Arabic 68–69, 72, Latin 60–61, 63.

best known "emir" of that name,[19] Maslama (d. 738) the son of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685–705), who was a prominent general and from 710 the governor of the Jazira, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and in 720–721 the governor of the two Iraqs.[20] This reference to an Umayyad leader has led some scholars to argue that even if the *Disputation* is not actually a product of the period of Maslama's governorate, it must nevertheless pre-date the Abbasid revolution of 750, after which it is thought unlikely that an Umayyad figure would have been selected to provide a historical context. While the proposed dating may be correct, this argument underestimates the abiding fame of Maslama, who is regularly referred to in Syriac chronicles[21] and, more importantly, entered both Christian and Islamic legend because of his siege of Constantinople in 717–718. Indeed, although the siege actually ended in failure, in later Islamic retellings it was transformed into a victory.[22] Furthermore, as we have seen, the traditions surrounding the founders of the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē had already established links with the Umayyad rulers, and these traditions were preserved into the 11th century.

Another passage that has sometimes been taken as evidence for an early 8th-century date for the *Disputation* is the section (§ 48) in which the monk states: "I believe that in your case also, Muḥammad did not teach you all your laws and your commandments in the Qurʾān, but there are some of them which you learned from the Qurʾān, and some of them are in the sūra of the Cow (ܒ݂ܣܘܪܬ ܐܠ ܒ̈ܩܪܬ, *b-ṣūrat ʾal-baqara*), and in GYGY (ܓܝܓܝ), and in TWRH (ܬܘܪܗ)." The first reference appears unambiguous, and seems to indicate the second and longest sūra of the Qurʾān, "the Cow",[23] although the monk clearly considers it to be an independent text. Is this evidence that at the date of the *Disputation*'s composition the Qurʾān

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**19** Another, later, possibility would be the Abbasid general Maslama b. Yaḥyā al-Bajalī, who came from Khurāsān, fought in Syria, and was made governor of Egypt in 789. See P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 179. Alternatively, given that the text is not a report of an actual debate, but a literary fabrication, it is also quite possible that the name was chosen just as an Arabic name known to have been used by members of the ruling classes, like referring to an English king named Henry or George, or a French king named Louis.

**20** See G. Rotter, "Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān", EI2, vol. 6, p. 740.

**21** For a list of references to him in Syriac, Greek, and Arabic chronicles see M. Canard, "Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende", *Journal asiatique* 208 (1926), p. 61–121, esp. p. 80 n. 5.

**22** See Canard, "Les expéditions des Arabes", p. 94–102; R. Guilland, "L'expédition de Maslama contre Constantinople (717–718)", *Al-Machriq* (1955), p. 89–112 ; E.W. Brooks, "The Campaign of 716–718, from Arabic Sources", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899), p. 19–31.

**23** In Arabic سورة البقرة.

had still not undergone its final redaction, and the sūra of the Cow was still an independent text?[24] Or is it better understood as an example of the rather confused way in which knowledge of Islamic holy texts circulated among the Christians for some time after the rise of Islam? John of Damascus in his *Book of Heresies*, written in Greek before 743, also refers to an Islamic writing called "the Cow",[25] but along with this he also mentions writings called "the camel of God", and "the woman". There is no sūra named "the camel of God", although some have sought to find parallels elsewhere in the Qurʾān (e.g. Q 7.73, 54.27, 91.13), and while "the woman" resembles the name of sūra 4, *al-Nisāʾ*, "the Women", the contents of the Qurʾānic text are quite different from those described by John.[26] More significantly, the early 9th-century Syriac *Legend of Sergius Baḥira* (a polemical text which relates the influence of a Christian monk on Muḥammad) has a section[27] in which the monk says he will write "a great book of commandments and laws" for Muḥammad and place it on the horn of a cow, so that Muḥammad could claim that the book had descended from heaven, and could say that since the earth was not worthy to receive it, the cow had taken it on its horn. The text continues "And until this day it is called the sūra of the Cow" (ܟܬܐ ܕܬܘܪܬܐ ܕܬܘܪܐ). Now it should also be noted that the *Disputation* is remarkable for the fact that it includes mention (§ 34) of Muḥammad having been taught by Sergius Baḥira, and scholars have long been uneasy about this early use of the double name for the famous monk, which, if an early 8th-century date for the *Disputation* is accepted, would be by far the earliest occurrence of it. A simple solution to these related problems is, of course, that the author of the *Disputation* knew some form of the Syriac Sergius Baḥira legend, including its reference to the sūra of the Cow, and one consequence of such knowledge is that an early 8th-century date for the composition of the *Disputation* is no longer possible.

The two other texts mentioned by the monk as being sources of Islamic laws and commandments are GYGY (ܓܝܓܝ), and TWRH (ܬܘܪܗ). The meaning of these terms is far from obvious. In an unpublished paper delivered at the Oxford Patristics Conference in 1991, Han Drijvers suggested that the first of these terms was a corruption of the Arabic *injīl*, Gospel (انجيل), presumably producing the hypo-

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24 See A.-L. de Prémare, "ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān et le processus de constitution du Coran", in K.-H. Ohlig and G.-R. Puin (eds), *Die dunklen Anfänge. Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 2005), p. 179–210.

25 P.B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 4 (PTS 22; Berlin, 1981), "heresy 100", p. 60–67.

26 See de Prémare, "ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān et le processus de constitution du Coran", p. 185–187.

27 East Syriac recension 16.14–15, see Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, p. 282–285.

thetical Syriac transcription ܐܘܐܓܓܠܝܘܢ), and the second was the Arabic word for Torah, *tawrāt* (تـــــوراة, which more closely matches the preserved Syriac letters ܬܘܪܝܐ). Drijvers' suggestion has been very widely accepted, but there seems to me to be several difficulties with it. (1). It is not clear why the monk would use the Arabic term for Gospel here, when the Muslim's question to him (§47) employed the usual Syriac term for the Gospel, *ʾewangeliyōn* (ܐܘܐܓܓܠܝܘܢ, from the same Greek original as the Arabic, εὐαγγέλιον), and the monk uses this Syriac word not only in the next paragraph of his reply (§48), but on all other occasions (§18, 30, 58). Similarly, the use of the Arabic term for Torah is puzzling, given that elsewhere (§40) the monk uses the standard Syriac term for Torah, *ʾōrāytā* (ܐܘܪܝܬܐ, which is borrowed from Jewish Aramaic). (2). The usual Qurʾānic order, following the order of revelation, would be "Torah and Gospel" (e.g. Q 5:68),[28] and so this cannot simply be a case of the repetition of a Qurʾānic formula. (3). It is possible to read the monk's reply as implying that Muḥammad was responsible not only for the Qurʾān, but for these other texts too. The verb used ("some which you learned from …") does not require this interpretation, but it is one possible, and quite natural, reading of the text. Such a reading would, of course, exclude the identification of these latter texts with the Gospel and Torah.

As an alternative, it has been proposed that these strange Syriac words be identified as references to two further Qurʾānic sūras.[29] The first is identified with sūra 29 "the Spider", in Arabic *al-ʿAnkabūt* (العنكبوت), a title which according to this theory has been translated by the usual Syriac word for spider, *gwāgay* (ܓܘܓܝ), and this word has subsequently been corrupted into ܓܒܪ. The second is identified with sūra 9 "Repentance", *at-Tawba* (التوبة), which in this case was not translated into Syriac,[30] but was transliterated from Arabic, producing ܬܘܒܬ which was corrupted into ܬܘܒܐ. These suggestions are also not without their difficulties. (1) It is required that both terms should have become corrupted in the course of copying (albeit minimally and plausibly). (2) Neither name is prefixed by the term sūra, and the second name does not have the anticipated Arabic definite article. (3) Why is "the Spider" alone translated into Syriac, rather than being

**28** See C.P. Adang, "Torah", in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 5 (Leiden, 2006), p. 300–311.

**29** S.H. Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian texts" (1992) [see n. 1 above], p. 260, n. 39 (sūra 29); id., *Syriac Writers on Muslims and the Religious Challenge of Islam* (Mōrān ʾEthʾō 7; Kottayam, 1995) p. 33 (sūras 29 and 9).

**30** The usual Syriac word for repentance is *tyābutā*, ܬܝܒܘܬܐ.

transliterated from Arabic? (4) While the mention of the sūra of the Cow can be explained, what would justify or explain the mention of these sūras?

An interesting parallel to the mention of "the Spider" is provided by the 8th-century West Syriac Chronicle of Zuqnīn,[31] in a damaged passage describing the circumstances surrounding the martyrdom of Cyrus of Ḥarrān by a Muslim governor[32] in 769–770, after he had reconverted to Christianity. The chronicler reports that many Christians voluntarily came to Ḥarrān to apostatise to Islam before the governors, and would then turn on the remaining Christians and taunt them. The words of their terse taunt have been reconstructed by Amir Harrak as follows:[33]

ܗ ܡܝܬ ܠ ܐܢܬ ܕ ܐܠܗ ܠ ܐܢܬ ܕ ܐܠܗ ܠ[ܐܢܬ ܕ ܐܠܗ ][34]ܐܠܐ ܗ ܐܡܪ ܠ ܐܢܬ ܕ ܐܠܗ ܠ ܐܢܬ ܕ ܐܠܗ ܠ
ܥܟܒܬ

They were saying to us, "You are godless, and you are hol[ding on, as it were, to the web] of a spider".

Harrak convincingly argues that this taunt, with its clear reference to a spider, is only intelligible in the light of sūra *al-ʿAnkabūt*, Q 29:41, which reads:[35]

> The likeness of those who have taken to them protectors, apart from God, is as the likeness of the spider that takes to itself a house; and surely the frailest of houses is the house of the spider, did they but know.

If Harrak is correct, as I believe he is, then it would seem that for the author of the Chronicle of Zuqnīn this polemical use of the Qurʾān was not only typical of taunts made against Christians in the late 8th century, but he could also presume that his Syriac Christian readers would recognise the allusion to "the spider" (us-

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**31** J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, vol. 2 (CSCO 104; Paris, 1933), p. 385, line 11–12; English translation by A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnin, Parts III and IV, A.D. 488–775* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), p. 324.

**32** Al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad (d. 802), brother of the caliphs al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, and governor of the Jazira from 759–772.

**33** A. Harrak, "Christianity in the eyes of the Muslims of the Jazirah at the end of the eighth century", *Parole de l'Orient* 20 (1995), p. 337–356, esp. p. 343–347. See also A. Harrak, "Piecing together the fragmentary account of the martyrdom of Cyrus of Ḥarrān", *Analecta Bollandiana* 121 (2003), p. 297–328.

**34** This is the absolute form of the noun, here written, as often, with a redundant final *yodh*. See T. Nöldeke (trans. J.A. Crichton), *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (London, 1904), § 50.B.

**35** I cite the English of A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, 1955).

ing the Syriac word, as in the *Disputation*), and the way in which this Qurʾānic passage was used against them. This in turn raises the strong possibility that the Islamic writings listed by the monk in the *Disputation* were not known to him as literary works that circulated independently of the Qurʾān, nor were they the names of a few sūras whose names had haphazardly been mentioned to him in conversation and which he mistakenly took to be independent works, but that they were known to him precisely because they were being cited by name against Christians in public contexts. A reference to sūra 9, *at-Tawba*, would fit well into such a pattern, since Q 9:29 is the Qurʾānic basis for the imposition of the jizya tax on the Christians,[36] and Q 9:30-35 contains classic attacks on the core Christian belief in Christ as Son of God, and on the excessive authority accorded to monks, and on their avarice.[37] That an 8th-century monastic writer in Iraq should have heard frequent mention of *at-Tawba* as a justification for Islamic laws, practices, and beliefs hardly seems surprising.

Another section that looks promising for dating purposes is § 10, in which the monk responds to the Muslim's statement (§ 9) that: "this is the sign that God loves us, and is pleased with our religion, that he has given us authority over all faiths and all peoples". The monk replies by reformulating this as a question concerning kingship as a mark of divine favour. He notes that for over two thousand years there were no kings at all, and that there were then pagan kings. So kingship is clearly not an essential part of the divine plan, and neither is it contingent upon correct belief. He then notes that the kings of Israel were often replaced by gentile kings as punishment for Israelite transgressions. Since God punishes his people by means of foreign rulers, the implicit suggestion is that the Islamic rulers are being so used to punish the sinful Christians (and this is made explicit in § 56). The monk then points out that the Muslims control only a small part of the earth, and that (non-Muslim) kings still rule elsewhere in the world. He mentions twenty-two kings in the North (a tradition taken from the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*), and for the South he mentions various cities and regions that still have kings. The implication is that these are non-Muslim kings, and yet Rayy (not far from Tehran) was under Islamic rule since the 640s; Hamadān (central Iran) since 645; Merv (Khurāsān) since 651; Gurgān, (near the Caspian Sea) since 716/7. How can this be explained? All of these cities were episcopal sees of the Church of the East, and

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**36** For an overview of divergent analysis of this passage, see P.L. Heck, "Poll Tax", in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 4 (Leiden, 2004), p. 151–155.

**37** The antagonism towards the Christian monks of Q 9:31, 34 contrasts with the more positive view of Q 5:82, a passage paraphrased by the Muslim notable in § 53 of the *Disputation*.

they continued to have bishops long after the Islamic conquest of their regions,[38] and so one can reasonably presume that they were in communication with the leaders of their church in Iraq. The early 8th century even saw the establishment of new monasteries near Merv and Rayy, which implies that local conditions were favourable to Christians.[39] Although we have few letters from the 8th century to prove that communications were open, at least not until those of Catholicos Timothy (r. 780–823) who refers to many of these cities, none of these cities is so remote that one can plausibly argue that an Iraqi monk of the early 8th century would have been unaware that they had fallen to Islamic rule. I would suggest, therefore, that the most likely explanation is that they are the product of a much later writer who is retroprojecting the names of cities which he believes may still have been free at the purported date of the *Disputation*, that is at the time of Maslama. Historical error of this sort seems more plausible than the contemporary ignorance implied by an early 8th-century date for our text.

Support for a later date may also be provided by the curious statement (§ 10) that "in the territory of the Romans[40] four kings reign". Reinink asked,[41] with some hesitation, whether the "four kings" might refer to the tetrarchy (two augusti and two caesares) of the emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305), a system which was instituted in 293 and ultimately ended around 313. Such a reference seems highly unlikely in an 8th-century Syriac author, but no one has yet come up with a better alternative explanation. Possibly the author had heard mention of various kings in Roman territory, understood broadly to be the lands north and west of the Islamic empire, and so this is a general statement to that effect. But "four" is quite specific, and contrasts with the "many kings" said to rule in "the land of the Cushites and of the Indians".

I would like to make a different suggestion, based on numismatic evidence. During the short reign of the Byzantine emperor Leo IV (r. 775–780), gold solidi were struck at the Constantinople mint portraying the bust of Leo IV side by side with that of his son Constantine VI on the obverse, and busts of his father Con-

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**38** See J.-M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beirut, 1993).

**39** See J.-M. Fiey, "Les communautés syriaques en Iran des premiers siècles à 1552", *Acta Iranica* 3 (1974), p. 279–297 (esp. p. 288) [rpr. in J.-M. Fiey, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552* (London, 1979), I.].

**40** *Bēt Rōmāyē*.

**41** Reinink, "Political Power" [see n. 1 above], p. 163, n. 42.

stantine V and grandfather Leo III on the reverse (see fig. 1).[42] Constantine VI was associated with his father as co-emperor in April 776, and so the solidus must have been produced after this.

Fig 1. Solidus of Leo IV (type 1)
(With permission of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., www.cngcoins.com)

A second type of the solidus was issued with Leo IV and his son seated on a double throne on the obverse, and with two busts on the reverse as before (see fig. 2).[43] Grierson has argued[44] that this issue dates from 778, following a Byzantine victory over the Arabs at Dabiq.[45]

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**42** See W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, vol. 2 (London, 1908), p. 393, pl. XLV.20; P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. 3.1: *Leo III to Michael III (717–867)* (Washington, 1973), p. 325–335, DOC 1b; D.R. Sear, *Byzantine Coins and their Values* (2nd ed.; London, 1987), SB 1583. (I am very grateful to Dr. David Salt for allowing me to consult him concerning these coins, though he is not, of course, responsible for any errors of interpretation I may have introduced.)

**43** Wroth, *Catalogue*, p. 394, pl. XLV.21; Grierson, *Catalogue*, DOC 2; Sear, *Byzantine Coins*, SB 1584.

**44** Grierson, *Catalogue*, p. 325. The legend on the coins, which puzzled numismatists for a long time, is also explained by Grierson.

**45** See E.W. Brooks, "Byzantines and Arabs in the time of the early Abbasids", *English Historical Review* 15 (1900), 728–747 (esp. 735); C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), p. 623, AM 6270, for a description of Leo and his son sitting enthroned at the triumph.

Fig 2. Solidus of Leo IV (type 2)
(With permission of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.)

Bronze folles[46] and half folles were also issued at Constantinople[47] with these images of "four kings", though they are rarely as well preserved as the gold coins.

Now the question arises, how would a writer in Islamic territory come to see coins minted in Constantinople? Gold is gold, whatever its form, and so it is possible that some travelled east in the usual ways, as a consequence of trade or plunder. However, it is noteworthy that in 782 the Byzantine forces suffered a series of heavy defeats, and a large army from Syria and Mesopotamia led by Hārūn (r. 786–809) the son of al-Mahdi (r. 775–785) advanced all the way to Chrysopolis (modern Üsküdar) on the Bosphoros, facing Constantinople. As a consequence the Empress regnant Irene (d. 803), the widow of Leo IV, agreed to pay tribute to the Arabs twice a year, and according to al-Ṭabari this amounted to 70 000 or 90 000 dinars in gold, silver, and goods, and he also notes that the tribute was paid.[48] So it is certain that vast quantities of Byzantine currency, presumably including large numbers of coins minted during the reign of the recently deceased Leo IV, were travelling east at this period. It is clearly impossible to prove that the reference in the *Disputation* to the Romans having four kings was based on a misinterpretation of the coinage of Leo IV, but such an interpretation is plausible, and the imagery was available. If this suggestion finds any support, then it will clearly have important consequences for our dating of the *Disputation*.

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**46** Wroth, *Catalogue*, p. 395–396 (again two types), pl. XLVI.3, 4; Grierson, *Catalogue*, DOC 4, 6; Sear, *Byzantine Coins*, SB 1586, 1587.

**47** A similar bronze follis, but no gold solidi, was also issued at the Syracuse mint. See Grierson, *Catalogue*, DOC 8, 6; Sear, *Byzantine Coins*, SB 1590.

**48** See Brooks, "Byzantines and Arabs", p. 738; Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 629, AM 6274; J.A. Williams (trans.), *Al-Ṭabari: The early Abbasi Empire*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1989), p. 213.

In summary, the *Disputation* is a product of a Syriac author belonging to the Church of the East. The text is a literary composition that claims to be the reworking of a private discussion that took place in the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē (most likely intended to be the one of that name located in the desert north-west of Ḥīra), and it is said that it took place during the life of the "emir Maslama" (probably to be identified with the Umayyad emir Maslama, d. 738). Most previous commentators have therefore sought to date the text to approximately 720, when Maslama became governor of the two Iraqs. Such a date is not compatible with the *Disputation*'s erroneous claim that in the time of Maslama a number of major cities in Iran, which were also Church of the East episcopal sees, had non-Islamic rulers. It is also incompatible with a reference to Sergius Baḥira by this name, whose legend is thought to date to the early 9th century. On the contrary, it seems likely that the *Disputation*'s assertion that the sūra *al-baqara*, "the Cow", was independent of the Qurʾān was reliant upon the legend of Sergius Baḥira, and so postdates it. It has also been argued that the other texts mentioned in this passage (§ 48) are not the Gospel and Torah, but two further sūras of the Qurʾān, and that one of these ("the Spider") was being used in anti-Christian polemic in the late 8th century. It has further been suggested that the ignorance concerning the timing of the Islamic conquest of the listed Iranian cities could also reflect a later date, and, far more tentatively, that the reference to the Romans being ruled by four kings might be a consequence of the sudden influx into Islamic territories of the coinage of Leo IV in 782, two years after his death. A late 8th-/early 9th-century date would also place the *Disputation* in a period when Syriac and Arabic-writing Christians were producing numerous apologetic texts against the claims of Islam, to varying degrees of philosophical sophistication, and no longer seemed interested in the apocalyptic hopes of the late 7th century, as typified by the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, a text which the author of the *Disputation* knew and used, but whose (now dated) apocalyptic fervour he ignored.

## Manuscripts

As so often with texts produced within the Church of the East the extant manuscript witnesses to the *Disputation* are relatively late – due not to the climate, but to the endless assaults of forces hostile to the continued presence of the Assyrians in their homelands, assaults which target not just the people but also the monuments and storehouses of their culture. This is, of course, a phenomenon that is tragically being repeated in our own days.

The text of the *Disputation* is edited below from the single Syriac manuscript to

which I had access, *olim* Diyarbakir Chaldean Archbishopric ms. 95,[49] now preserved in the library of the Chaldean cathedral in Mardin.[50] It contains a collection of forty-three disparate hymns, prayers, theological opuscula, and exegetical notes, and was named by a later donor as "The Book of the Garden, or of Gleanings"[51] (the latter term, *luqāṭē*, being a standard term for selected short texts or extracts).[52] Earlier studies of the *Disputation* have tentatively dated the manuscript to the early 18th century, but a note after item 8, a poem on Rabban Hormizd by Sargis bar Wahlē of Azerbaijan (late 15th / early 16th century),[53] states that the poem was completed (i.e. copied) on the 27 Adar (March) 1894 of the Greeks, that is AD 1583,[54] in the monastery of Mar John the Egyptian.[55] Since the manuscript is lacking one or more quires at the end there is no final colophon, but it is reasonable to presume that the whole manuscript was finished later in 1583.

I have not had access to the two other known witnesses believed to be extant.

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**49** See A. Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés à l'archevêché chaldéen de Diarbékir", *Journal asiatique* X.10 (1907), [p. 331–362; 385–431], p. 395–398 (ms. 95, item 35).

**50** For an account of the remarkable survival of the Diyarbakir manuscripts during the first world war see W.F. Macomber, "New finds of Syriac manuscripts in the Middle East", in W. Voigt (ed.), *XVII. Deutscher Orientalistentag vom 21. bis 27. Juli 1968 in Würzburg* (ZDMG Supplement 1.2; Wiesbaden, 1969), [p. 473–482], p. 479–480. On the basis of his visits to the library in Mardin between 1965–1967, Macomber produced an unpublished checklist of the manuscripts of the cathedral library in which ms. *olim* Diyarbakir 95 received the shelf mark Macomber 60.3. Digital images of the manuscript are now accessible through the Hill Museum and Monastic Library (www.hmml.org), where it has been assigned the reference CCM 00398.

**51** In Syriac ܚܕܐ ܕܟܪܟܐ ܘܐ ܕܠܩܛܦܐ.

**52** It is written on paper, in a single column, and contains 345 folios, measuring 27 by 17.5 cm. The *Disputation* is on ff. 267r–274v.

**53** See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922), p. 330–331; R. Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin, 1976), p. 35–36. The text was edited (from a different manuscript) by E.A.W. Budge, *The Life of Rabban Hôrmîzd and the Foundation of his Monastery at Al-Kôsh: A Metrical Discourse by Wahlê, Surnamed Sergius of Âdhôrbâîjân* (Semitistische Studien 2/3; Berlin, 1894).

**54** The copyist was a priest and monk named Joseph.

**55** Located in lower Dera, on the banks of the Tigris near Finik, in Qardu (Corduene). See J.-M. Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (CSCO 388; Louvain, 1977), p. 197–199. According to a further marginal note, the manuscript was later (before 1698) donated to the church of Mar Pethion in Diyarbakir.

The first of these, Mardin Chaldean Bishopric ms. 82,[56] was copied in 1890,[57] and contains, after some other works,[58] a collection of polemical texts relating to Islam (in which the *Disputation* follows the history of Sergius Bahira).[59] The second is *olim* Alqosh, Couvent de Notre Dame-des-Semences, ms. Scher 144.[60] This manuscript, another "Book of Gleanings", although containing a quite different selection of texts to *olim* Diyarbakir ms. 95, was dated on the basis of its script to the 19th century. The *Disputation* follows the history of Sergius Bahira and a note on the caliphs. The volume was already missing from the monastery library by the time of Vosté's visit in 1926.[61] According to Fiey[62] it had been removed by Mgr. Jérémie Timothée Maqdassi,[63] and in 1965 it was still in the possession of his heirs in Baghdad.

A fourth witness, Siirt ms. 112,[64] was dated by Addai Scher, on the basis of its script, to the 15th century. It contained a very mixed collection of texts, with the *Disputation*, at the end, following the History of Sergius Bahira. Unfortunately, the

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**56** See A. Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque de l'évêché chaldéen de Mardin", *Revue des bibliothèques* 18 (1908), [p. 64–95], p. 87 (ms. 82, item 6). In Macomber's unpublished checklist it has the shelf mark Macomber 100.11. The majority of the manuscripts from Mardin have now been digitized and catalogued by the Hill Museum and Monastic Library, but this manuscript is missing, and so appears to have been separated from the Mardin collection at some date after Macomber's visit. (My thanks to Dr. Adam McCollum for confirming this.)

**57** The scribe was Mgr. Elia Millos (1831–1908), Chaldean bishop of Aqra. The manuscript was written on paper, 23 by 16 cm, and contains 89 folios.

**58** Namely: Barhebraeus' *Book of the Dove*; a biography of Barhebraeus; a collection of useful counsels. Subsequently a later copy of Barhadbshabba's *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* was bound in at the front of the volume.

**59** The other texts are a section of Bar Salibi's refutation of the Muslims, and (at the end) another section against "the idolators".

**60** See A. Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du couvent des Chaldéens de Notre-Dame-des-Semences", *Journal asiatique* X.7 (1906), [p. 479–512; X.8 (1906), p. 55–82], p. 76 (ms. 144, item 6).

**61** See J.M. Vosté, "Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences près d'Alqos (Iraq)", *Angelicum* 5 (1928), p. 3–36, 161–194, 325–358, 481–498; reprinted as a separate volume, with the same title (Rome / Paris, 1929).

**62** J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne. Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq* (Beirut, 1965), vol. II, p. 465.

**63** Bishop of Zakho from 1892–1929.

**64** See A. Scher, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan) avec notes bibliographiques* (Mosul, 1905), p. 81–82 (ms. 112, item XXII).

same tragedy which led to the murder of Bishop Scher[65] in 1915 also resulted in the destruction of this manuscript, along with most other volumes of his episcopal library.[66]

## Notes to the Edition

Since the text is edited from a single manuscript, *olim* Diyarbakir Chaldean Archbishopric ms. 95, there are no textual variants. Corrections to the text, or to its punctuation, are enclosed in square brackets [ ], and are explained in the notes. Orthography has not been altered or standardised. The manuscript provides occasional vowels, but these I have omitted.

The manuscript is written in a single unbroken column. I have subdivided the text into numbered paragraphs, on the basis of changes of speaker or of content. There are also a few unnumbered paragraphs, introduced to facilitate the side by side reading of the text and translation.

The title of the *Disputation* and the indications of speaker ("the Muslim says", "the monk says") were written in red ink in the manuscript. This has not been reproduced here, and so the loss of rubrics indicating the speakers requires a minimal addition of punctuation, which is indicated by brackets.

I have attempted to produce a translation that remains close to the underlying Syriac, without descending into "translationese". Words that I have supplied in the translation to aid the reader are placed within parentheses ( ).

Folio breaks and their numeration are included in the Syriac text, and in the facing English translation I have also indicated the approximate place of the break with a vertical line. Earlier articles on the *Disputation* numbered its folios from 1a to 8b, rather than using the actual folio numbers. I hope that the following table will make cross-reference easier:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1a | 267r | 3a | 269r | 5a | 271r | 7a | 273r |
| 1b | 267v | 3b | 269v | 5b | 271v | 7b | 273v |
| 2a | 268r | 4a | 270r | 6a | 272r | 8a | 274r |
| 2b | 268v | 4b | 270v | 6b | 272v | 8b | 274v |

**65** See S.P. Brock and G.A. Kiraz, "Scher, Addai (1867–1915)", in S.P. Brock, *et alii*, (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ, 2011), p. 361–362.

**66** For details see Macomber, "New finds" [see n. 50 above], p. 479.

267r| ܐܦ ܒܚܝܠ ܐܠܗܐ ܢܟܬܒ ܦܘܠܡܝܣ ܕܐܬܥܒܕ ܒܝܢ ܚܕ ܡܫܡܗܢܝܐ ܘܚܕ ܡܢ ܐܒܗܬܢ ܒܕܝܪ ܒܝܬ ܚܠܐ.

Again, by (the help of) God we will write down the Disputation that took place between a certain Muslim[67] and a certain Monk[68] in the Monastery of Bēt Ḥālē.[69]

[1] ܐܝܟ ܕܥܠ ܡܐ ܕܐܚܢ ܐܚܝ ܘܚܒܝܒ ܢܦܫܝ ܐܒܐ ܝܥܩܘܒ ܫܦܝܪ ܠܟ ܘܐܬܚܫܒ ܠܟ ܠܡܫܐܠ ܡܢ ܟܬܒ ܡܠܬܢ ܥܠ ܡܐ ܕܐܬܝܗܒ ܠܢ ܒܟ ܒܝܕ ܒܪ ܫܡܥܐܝܠ ܘܡܛܠ ܕܐܦ ܠܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡ ܐܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܠܐܚܝܟ ܘܐܢ 

ܐܦܠ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܬܘܠ ܠܟ ܒܫܐܠܬܐ ܘܦܘܫܩܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܫܦܝܪ ܠܝ ܒܗ ܘܫܒܚ ܠܡܢ ܕܝܗܒ ܚܝܠ ܠܠܚܫܝܫ ܘܡܥܘܕܕ ܠܡܢ ܕܩܪܝ ܒܫܡܗ.

then, I shall set it down in (the form of) question and answer, as is appropriate.[74] Praise be to Him who gives strength to the weak, and aids those who call upon His name!

ܘܐܦ ܕܡܢ ܕܒܝܬ ܒܢܝܢܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܫܪܝܪ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܫܬܪܐ ܥܠ ܐܘܣܬܘܬܐ ܕܒܢܝܢܗ ܗܟܢ ܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܫܦܝܠܐ ܕܒܪ ܡܫܬܪܐ ܕܝܠܢ ܢܫܪܝ ܘܢܫܠܡ ܥܡ ܡܪܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܒܨܠܘܬܟ ܘܒܨܠܘܬܐ ܕܟܠ ܩܕܝܫܐ.

Now, just as it is right that a wise builder lays down a solid stone at the beginning of the foundations of his building, so also we weak ones, let us begin and complete our discourse with our Lord Jesus Christ (the chief corner stone),[75] through (the aid of) your prayers and the prayers of all the Saints.

[2] ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܡܪܝ ܗܘ ܓܒܪܐ ܡܣܠܡܝܐ ܕܡܢ ܪܫܝܟܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܐܡܝܪܐ ܡܣܠܡ ܘܒܓܠܠ ܚܠܝ ܕܐܬܐ ܠܢ ܐܬܐ ܠܘܬܢ.

[2] Now, O master, that Muslim man was one of the notables[76] who (served) before the emir[77] Maslama,[78] and by reason of an illness he had (contracted) he came to us,

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74 Bar Bahlūl (ed. R. Duval, *Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano Bar-Bahlule* [3 vols; Paris, 1888–1901], I.595–596) defines *drāšā* (ܕܪܫܐ) as "investigation (ܒܥܝ) and debate (ܡܚܘܝܐ) concerning something about which there is controversy (ܣܓܝܐ), which takes place with the aim of improvement. It is conducted by question and answer (ܫܐܠܬܐ ܘܦܘܫܩܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܐ) and in a didactic manner, or again in sophistic structure, question (responded to) by question". (ܕܪܫܐ: ܒܥܝ ܘܡܚܘܝܐ ܕܒܟ ܡܬܚ ܕܢܗ ܒܟܟ[ܘ] ܣܓܝܐ. ܐܦܐ ܕܡܢ ܫܐܠܬܐ ܘܦܘܫܩܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܐ ܘܐܦ ܕܡܢ ܫܐܠܬܐ ܘܦܘܫܩܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܫܦܝܪ ܠܝ ܒܗ ܘܫܒܚ ܠܡܢ ܕܝܗܒ ܚܝܠ ܠܠܚܫܝܫ ܘܡܥܘܕܕ ܠܡܢ ܕܩܪܝ ܒܫܡܗ. ܘܐܦ

ܠܗ. ܘܩܝܡ ܥܡܢ ܥܣܪ ܝܘܡܝܢ. ܘܡܬܠ ܥܡ ܚܪܝܬܐ ܘܡܬܐ. ܘܐܠܦ ܒܟܬܒܝ ܡܪܢ ܘܒܩܪܝܢ ܕܝܗܘܢ. ܘܟܕ ܚܙܐ ܨܠܘܬܢ ܕܥܒܕܝܢ ܒܫܘܪܝ ܘܒܬܩܢ. ܫܒܥ ܙܒܢ ܒܝܘܡܐ ܐܢܐ ܫܒܚ ܠܟ ܥܠ ܡܫܪܝ ܕܝܢܟ. ܐܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܕܘܝܕ ܩܕܝܫܐ. ܫܒܥ ܙܒܢ ܒܝܘܡܐ ܫܒܚܬ ܠܟ ܥܠ ܡܫܪܝ ܕܝܢܟ. ܘܡܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܓܒܪܐ ܕܒܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܪܒ ܒܝܬ ܐܡܝܪ ܘܡܢ ܕܝܠܝ ܥܒܕ ܠܗ ܫܘܠܛܢ ܥܠ ܥܡܐ ܗܢ ܒܬܪ ܕܒܫܘܠܛܢ ܥܠ ܥܡܐ ܗܢ ܒܬܪ ܕܒܫܘܠܛܢ ܥܠ ܥܡܐ ܗܢ ܒܬܪ ܕ[ܒ]

[4] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܫܝܠܐ ܒܪ ܡܠܟ[.] ܫܪܝ ܥܡܝ ܒܥܘܬܐ ܕܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܥܡܟ ܐܡܠܠ ܒܥܘܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܬ ܡܫܠܡ ܠܝ ܒܫܘܐܠܐ. ܘܗܘ ܨܒܝܢܢ ܠܡܣܒ ܒܫܬܘܬܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܟܕ ܐܢܫ ܫܪܝ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܣܟܠܐ ܗܘ ܚܫܝܒ ܥܡ ܚܟܝܡܐ. ܐܠܐ ܐܢ ܨܒܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܡܝܠܦ ܫܪܪܐ ܥܡ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܠܝ ܒܠܬܪܓܡܢ. ܡܛܠ ܕܟܕ ܫܐܠ ܐܢܬ ܠܝ ܐܝܟ ܗܟܝ ܢܗܘܐ ܫܪܪ ܕܢܡܠܠ ܥܡ ܚܕ ܒܫܘܐܠܐ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܪܒ ܐܢܬ ܠܡܛܠ ܫܘܠܛܢܟ ܘܝܩܪܟ ܐܢܐ ܐܝܕܥ ܕܟܠ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܢ ܕܗܘ ܕܐܢܐ ܐܬܚܫܒ ܠܟ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܠܐ ܬܣܒܪ ܦܢܝ ܒܝ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܠܡ ܠܟ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܬ ܨܒܐ ܠܡܫܐܠ ܠܝ ܫܪܪܐ ܥܠ ܗܝܡܢܘܬܝ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܪܒ ܐܢܬ ܐܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܐ ܝܕܥ ܕܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܝܪܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ ܐܦܠܚ ܠܟ ܐܢ ܐܡܪ ܠܟ ܐܢܬ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܒܠܐ ܕܢܣܒ ܦܢܝ ܠܐ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܠܡ ܠܟ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܡܫܠܡ ܠܝ ܐܢ

[6] ܐܡܪ ܡܢܝܚ ܫܐܠܐ.] ܐܝܟ ܕܡܐ ܕܐܢ ܒܗ ܫܟܝܟ ܐܢܬ ܒܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܒܬܘܪܝܬܐ ܐܘ ܒܣܒܪܐ ܕܐܢܫ ܢܬܒ ܠܟ ܐܡܬ.

[6] The Monk says: Speak out about anything whose truth you doubt, and we, as far as we are able, will provide an answer, either from the Scriptures, or from rational argument, and whatever you recognise to be the truth you should accept.

[7] ܐܡܪ ܡܘܫܠܡܢܐ.] ܐܝܟ ܕܝܥ ܐܢܐ ܕܟܠ ܚܕ ܠܗܝܡܢܘܬܗ ܝܩܪ ܠܗ. ܐܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܗܠ ܕܝܢܢ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܕܟܠ ܥܡܡܐ ܕܒܥܠ ܕܝܢ ܐܢܬ.

[7] The Muslim says: I know that everyone's faith is dear to him, but tell me the truth: is our religion not better than all the (other) religions on earth?

[8] ܐܡܪ ܡܢܝܚ ܫܐܠܐ.] ܒܡܐ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ.

[8] The Monk says: In what way?

[9] ܐܡܪ ܡܘܫܠܡܢܐ.] ܐܢ ܨܒܝܢ ܐܢܢ ܕܢܛܪ ܥܠ ܦܘܩܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܕܩܪܒܢܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ. ܐܘ ܐܢ ܨܒܝܢ ܐܢܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܥܒܕ ܒܪ ܠܐܠܗܐ. ܨܒܝܢ ܐܢܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܣܓܕ ܠܨܠܒܐ ܘܠܓܪܡܝ ܩܕܝܫܐ. ܘܠܐ ܢܣܓܕ ܠܨܠܡܐ ܕܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܐܦ ܠܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܘܕܡܝ ܠܢ. ܘܐܦ ܒܫܘܒܥ ܐܚܪܢ ܐܢܢ ܕܠܐ ܥܒܕܢ ܠܨܠܒܐ ܘܠܓܪܡܝ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܘܠܨܠܡܐ ܕܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܐܢܢ ܡܫܬܒܚܝܢ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܐܢܢ ܘܐܦ ܐܢܬ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܐܠܗ ܐܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܬ ܐܡܪ ܠܢ ܕܐܠܗ ܐܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܢ ܐܡܪܝܢ ܠܟ ܕ

ܕܡܬܥܡܕ ܘܡܘܕܐ ܠܗ ܒܥܠܡܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܡܠܟ ܘܟܠ ܥܠܡܐ ܐܬܟܢܫ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܕܒܪܝܬ ܥܠܡܐ ܥܕ ܕܡܒܘܠ ܐܠܦ ܬܪܬܝܢ ܡܐܐ ܘܬܪܬܝܢ ܘܐܪܒܥܝܢ ܘܬܪܝܢ ܫܢܝܢ ܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܡܠܟ ܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ ܘܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܕܡܒܘܠ ܡܠܟ ܢܡܪܘܕ ܓܒܪܐ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܘܒܬܪܝܗ ܗܘܘ ܡܠܟܝܢ ܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ

them: "Everyone who is baptised and confesses the Son, his sins will be forgiven him".[88] And this is the sign that God loves us, and is pleased with our religion, that he has given us authority over all faiths and all peoples. And behold, they are our slaves and subjects! And so I want you to give me an honest answer about these things, without paying any regard to my status, and without protecting yourself with falsehood!

[10] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܪܗܒܐ [.] ܫܦܝܪ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ ܕܐܦ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܡܠܟ ܘܟܠ ܥܠܡܐ ܐܬܟܢܫ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܕܒܪܝܬ ܥܠܡܐ ܥܕ ܕܡܒܘܠ ܐܠܦ ܬܪܬܝܢ ܡܐܐ ܘܬܪܬܝܢ ܘܐܪܒܥܝܢ ܘܬܪܝܢ ܫܢܝܢ ܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܡܠܟ ܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ ܘܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܕܡܒܘܠ ܡܠܟ ܢܡܪܘܕ ܓܒܪܐ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܘܒܬܪܝܗ ܗܘܘ ܡܠܟܝܢ ܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ

[10] The Monk says: You may well say that you are kings and (that) the whole world has been subjected to you. Formerly, however, from the beginning of our creation until the flood, (that is) two thousand years plus two hundred and forty-two years,[89] there was no king upon the earth. And after the flood there reigned Nimrod the giant, the first king on the earth.[90] And after him there were

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**88** See Acts 2:38.

**89** The Hebrew and Peshiṭṭa text of Genesis date the flood to 1656 after creation, but the Septuagint, Hippolytus, and Eusebius all date it to 2242 – see W. Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 26: Washington, D.C. 1989), p. 47–50 – and hence it entered some parts of the Syriac historiographical tradition, such as the West Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. It is rather surprising to see it cited here by the monk, since, by contrast, the East Syriac chronicler Elijah of Nisibis (d. 1046) keeps to the Peshiṭṭa dating – or so it would seem from his dating of Noah's fathering of Shem (1556), and Shem's fathering of Arpachshad (1658); see L.J. Delaporte, *La Chronographie de Mar Élie bar-Šinaya, métropolitain de Nisibe* (Paris, 1910), p. 6. Nor was the Septuagint date adopted by the *Cave of Treasures* (ed. S.-M. Ri, *La Caverne des Trésors: les deux recensions syriaques* [CSCO 486, 487: Leuven, 1987]), XIV.15, XVII.22) or the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (II.3), both of which date the flood to the last year of the second millennium.

**90** See Gen 10:8–12; *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* III.5; *Cave of Treasures* 24:24–26. For Nimrod in Syriac tradition see D. Taylor, "The Patriarch and the Pseudepigrapha : Extra-biblical traditions in the writings of Kyriakos of Tagrit (793–817)", in F. Briquel Chatonnet and M. Debié (eds), *Sur les*

ܐܝܟ ܕܒܗܘ ܡܠܟ̈ܐ ܕܥܒ̈ܕܘ ܒܪ̈ܝܬܐ ܘܒܬܪ̈ܝܗܘܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܒܗܘ ܡܠܟ̈ܐ ܕܡ̈ܕܝܐ ܘܦܪ̈ܣܝܐ ܘܥܡ ܗ̈ܠܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܒܗܘ ܡܠܟ̈ܐ ܕܪ̈ܘܡܝ ܐܦ ܒܗ̈ܕܐ ܪ̈ܒܥܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢ̈ܬܐ ܕܐ̈ܢܬܘܢ ܒ̈ܗ ܚ̈ܐ ܗ̈ܫܐ.

pagan kings who worshipped created things. And afterwards there reigned[91] some of the people of the Jews, and along with them (some) pagans also, (for) when the people of Israel angered God, God would punish them by means of these kings of the peoples. And after the kings of the Hebrews there reigned the kings of the Medes and of the Persians, and along with them (the kings) of the Romans also, in this quarter of the East in which we are dwelling.

ܐ̈ܠܝܢ ܕܬܠ̈ܬ ܪ̈ܒܥ̈ܝ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܣ̈ܓܝ̈ܐ ܡܠ̈ܟܐ ܕܠܐ ܝ̈ܕܥܝܢ ܐܦ ܒܪ̈ܝܬܐ ܕܫ̈ܟܝܢܢ ܒ̈ܗ ܚ̈ܐ ܗ̈ܫܐ. ܒܬܪ̈ܥܐ ܕܣ̈ܛܪ̈ܐ ܬ̈ܪ̈ܝܢ ܥ̈ܣܪ̈ܝ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܐ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܝܢ. ܒܡ̈ܥܪ̈ܒܐ ܕܗ̈ܢܕ̈ܘ ܘܕܗ̈ܢܕ̈ܝܐ ܣ̈ܓܝ̈ܐ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܐ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܝܢ. ܒܬܪ̈ܥܐ ܕܪ̈ܘܡܝ ܐ̈ܪܒܥ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܐ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܝܢ. ܒܬܪ̈ܥܐ ܕܬ̈ܝܡ̈ܢ̈ܐ ܣ̈ܓܝ̈ܐ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܐ ❖ ܡ̈ܠ̈ܟܝܢ.

But in those (other) three quarters (of the world) many kings were reigning who were not (even) aware of our presence in the world. In the North, then, twenty-two kings reign.[92] In the West, however, in the land of the Cushites and of the Indians,[93] there are many kings, and in the territory of the Romans[94] four kings reign.[95] In the South there are many

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*pas des Araméens chrétiens. Mélanges offerts à Alain Desreumaux* (Cahiers d'études syriaques 1; Paris, 2010), p. 35–61.

**91** Reading ܐܡܠܟ as Aphʿel P3M perfect. It is also possible to read it as an S3M verb, with God as its subject, "He caused to reign".

**92** See *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* VIII.3–10, and the twenty-two peoples descended from Japheth who were imprisoned by Alexander the Great behind the gates of the North.

**93** The "Cushites" are the Nubians and Ethiopians. "Indians" (Syriac *hendwāyē*) is a term often used in Late Antiquity, by both Greek and Syriac writers, not only for the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, but also for the people of South Arabia and Ethiopia, or indeed in general for any dark-skinned people. See J.Y. Nadeau, "Ethiopians", *Classical Quarterly* 64 [n.s. 20] (1970), p. 339–349; U.P. Arora, "India, vis-à-vis Egypt-Ethiopia in Classical Accounts", *Graeco-Arabica* 1 (1982), p. 131–140; A. Dihle, "The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Association* n.s. 10 (1964), p. 15–23; A. Mingana, "The Early Spread of Christianity to India", BJRL 10 (1926), p. 435–510 (esp. 443–446).

**94** *Bēt Rumāyē*. Or "among the Romans".

**95** For the suggestion that this statement was influenced by the circulation in the east of Byzan-

ܗܢܘ ܡܠܟ̈ܐ ❖ ܕܒܝܬ ܪܒܥ̈ܐ ❖ ܒܣܝܢ ❖ ܒܣܝܪܢ ❖ ܒܪܝ ❖ ܒܗܡܕܢ ❖ ܒܓܘܪܓܢ ❖ ܒܓܝܠܢ ❖ ܒܐܪܥ̈ܐ ܕܓܙܝܪ̈ܐ ❖ ܡܠܟ̈ܐ ܫܢ̈ܝܐ ܒܙܒܢ̈ܐ ❖ ܐܢ̈ܬ ܒܢܝ ܫܡܥܝܠ ❖ ܡܠܟ ܡܠ̈ܟܐ ❖ ܒܥ̈ܐ ❖ ܐܢ̈ܬ ❖ ܒܢ̈ܝ ❖ ܫܡܥܝܠ ❖ ܒܥ̈ܐ ❖ ❖ ❖

ܕܢ ܕܝ [ܐܒܪܗܡ]ܕܥܠ ܡܬܟܠܡܝܢ ܐܢܢ ܕܐܒܗ ܗܘ ܕܢܒܝܐ ܘܡܠܟܐ ܘܡܣܗܕ ܠܗ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܙܕܝܩ ܗܘ.

commandments, even though he is the father of the prophets[105] and of the kings, and Scripture bears witness to his righteousness?

[14] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܢܙܪ[.] ܐܝܟ ܗܝ ܕܗܝ ܕܐܡܝܢ ܐܢܬ ܫܐܠ ܠܢ ܥܠ ܐܒܪܗܡ. ܘܐܝܟ ܗܝ ܡܨܘܬܗ ܕܒܥܐ ܐܢܬ ܕܢܥܒܕ ܠܢ.

[14] The Monk says: Which belief concerning Abraham do you ask of us, and which commandments of his do you wish us to perform?

[15] ܐܡܪ ܡܘܫܠܡܢ[.] ܕܡܘܠ ܘܕܒܚܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܩܒܠ ܗܘ.

[15] The Muslim says: Circumcision and sacrifice, because he received them from God.

[16] ܐܡܪ ܡܢܙܪ[.] ܫܪܝܪ ܗܘ ܕܐܒܗ ܗܘ ܕܢܒܝܐ ܘܡܠܟܐ ܘܙܕܝܩܘܬܗ ܐܦ ܠܟܠ ܕܩܪܐ ܒܟܬܒܐ ܦܫܝܛ ܗܘ. ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܨܠܡܐ ܒܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܘܡܠܬܐ ܒܥܒܕܐ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܗܕܝܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܐܒܘܢ ܒܚܕܬܬ ܥܒܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܚܝܐ ܢܦܫܬܢ.

[16] The Monk says: It is true that Abraham is the father of the prophets and of the kings, and his righteousness is also clear to all who read the Scriptures. But like a shadow in the place of a body, and speech in relation to a deed, so also is the guidance of our father Abraham in relation to the new things which Christ performed for the salvation of our lives.[106]

[17] ܐܡܪ ܡܘܫܠܡܢ[.] ܒܐܝܟ ܐܘܪܚܐ[.]

[17] The Muslim says: In what way?

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**105** A common Islamic title for Abraham.

**106** This typological exegesis of the Old Testament (and creation), in which types or symbols find their fulfilment in Christ, is standard in Syriac exegesis and theology. See S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem.* (2nd ed.; *Cistercian Studies* 124; Kalamazoo, 1992); R. Murray, "The theory of symbolism in St Ephrem's theology", *Parole de l'Orient* 6 (1975), p. 1–20.

[18] ܡܢܝܬ ܐܡܪ ܐܢ[.] ܡܛܠ ܕܐܢܬ ܓܒܪܐ ܕܩܪܐ ܘܡܬܒܨܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܡܫܡܥ ܠܝ ܒܫܦܝܪ ܡܛܠ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܗܟܢܐ ܒܣܦܪ ܕܡܬܝ. ܡܢ ܐܒܪܗܡ ܥܕ ܕܘܝܕ ܐܪܒܥܣܪ ܕܪ̈ܐ. ܘܡܢ ܕܘܝܕ ܥܕ ܓܠܘܬܐ ܕܒܒܠ ܐܪܒܥܣܪ ܕܪ̈ܐ. ܘܡܢ ܓܠܘܬܐ ܕܒܒܠ ܥܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܪܒܥܣܪ ܕܪ̈ܐ. ܘܡܢ ܓܠܘܬܐ ܕܒܒܠ ܥܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܪܒܥܣܪ ܕܪ̈ܐ. ܐܦ ܥܠ ܦܝ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܪ̈ܥ ܗܘ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܕܕܪ̈ܐ ܒܥܐ ܗܘ ܡܒܪܟ ܡܬܝ ܕܒܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܘܒܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܒܥܐ ܗܘ ܕܢܬܝܪ̈ ܘܡܠ̈ܟܐ ܘܒܙܒܢ ܐܚܪܢ ܒܥܐ ܗܘ ܕܩܠ̈ܣ ܘܟܗ̈ܢܐ. ܘܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܐܦ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ̈ܬ ܩܕܡ ܗܘ ܕܡܬ ܒܗ ܨܠܡܐ ܕܫܪܪܐ.

[18] The Monk says: Since you are a man who reads and is thoughtful, listen to me clearly, for it is written thus in the Gospel of Matthew: "From Abraham to David, fourteen generations, and from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian exile to Christ, fourteen generations."[107] And even though the number of the generations was (indeed) not deficient,[108] yet the blessed Matthew (also) wanted to confirm with regard to the commandments and laws that were given to us from time to time – that is, at one time by means of prophets and revelations, and at (another) time (by means of) prophets and kings, and at (another) time (by means of) judges and priests, – even as I said previously, (namely, that) all of them bore the (mere) shadow of the truth.[109]

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**107** Mt 1:17.

**108** In fact, Syriac (and Greek) biblical exegetes were uncomfortably aware that Matthew had omitted various generations, and that his arithmetic was suspect. Ishoʿdad of Merv (fl. 850) notes that Luke counted 43 generations from David to Christ, whereas Matthew had 28 generations, and he claims that the real figure was 32. He denies that Matthew was in error, but argues that 14 was a purely symbolic number for the Jews, and hence it was used by Matthew. See M.D. Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv*, vol. 1 (*Horae Semiticae* 5; Cambridge, 1911), p. 10–12.

**109** Ishoʿdad of Merv provides a similar commentary on this verse: "Matthew wishing to convince (the Jews) that the government of God does not remain the same, but operates in sundry and diverse manners so as to help men, desired to establish his doctrine from the government that had been amongst them. From Abraham, indeed to David, they were without kings, but were submissive to those who were called judges; from David to the Captivity they were under kings who were from David; after David they were under High Priests" (see Gibson, *The Commentaries*, p. 10). Here in the *Disputation* the rulers mentioned for each period are slightly different, and the eras are given in reverse order (judges and priests; prophets and kings; prophets and revelations), but the nature and purpose of the analysis are closely related.

ܗܘ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܟܘܠܬܗ ܕܕܒܝܚܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܢܣܒ ܨܠܡܐ ܕܕܒܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܕܐܬܝܗ ܠܗ ܦܘܩܕܢܐ ܕܡܘܠܬܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܬ ܒܗ ܡܪܢ ܠܢ (ܡܬܢܬܐ) 269r| ܕܡܘܬܗ ܘܩܒܪܗ ܘܩܝܡܬܗ. ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܒܗ ܙܒܢܐ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܬܓܙܪ ܠܐ ܐܬܩܪܝ ܒܪ ܐܒܪܗܡ. ܗܟܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܦ ܗܫܐ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܥܡܕ ܠܐ ܐܬܩܪܝ ܟܪܣܛܝܢܐ.

(So) also, the eating of the sacrifice of Abraham bore the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ. Just as | (the command of) circumcision was given to him, which is the sign of those who accept the Law, so also our Lord gave to us (baptism), the type of his death and of his burial and of his resurrection.[110] And just as in that time anyone who was not circumcised was not called a son of Abraham, so also today anyone who is not baptised is not called a Christian.

[19] ܐܡܪ ܡܫܠܡܢܐ ܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܕ[.] ܡܥܡܕܝܬܐ ܒܝܢ ܒܢܝ ܡܫܟܚܐ ܟܕ ܡܘܠܬܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܒܝܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܒܪܗܡ. ܐܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܗܐ ܟܕ ܡܘܠܬܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܗܘ ܕܡܬ[111] ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢ ܐܢܐ ܕ[ܐ]ܡܪ ܕܐܬ ܒܗ ܡܪܢ ܠܢ ܐܦ ܗܫܐ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܥܡܕ ܠܐ ܐܬܩܪܝ ܟܪܣܛܝܢܐ.

[19] The Muslim says: I know that baptism among the Christians is like circumcision among the sons of Abraham, but tell me, how is the sacrifice of Abraham a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ?

[20] ܐܡܪ ܡܢܙܪܝ ܕ[.] ܐܒܪܗܡ ܐܬܦܩܕ ܕܢܣܒ ܠܒܪܗ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܐܬܪ ܕܗܘܐ ܨܠܡܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܬܝܕ ܠܡܬܠ ܥܠ ܥܠܡܢ. ܐܦ ܗܟܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܡܪܢ ܕܥܬܝܕ ܠܡܬܠ ܥܠ ܥܠܡܢ

[20] The Monk says: Abraham was commanded to offer up his son as a sacrifice, so that he might be a type of our Lord who was going to suffer for us.[112] And the

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**110** The command of circumcision given to Abraham was considered by Christians from the earliest days to be a type of Christian baptism. Within the Syriac tradition it is found already in Aphrahat (fl. 340) and Ephrem (d. 373): see R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh, 2004), p. 50–53; G. Saber, *La théologie baptismale de Saint Ephrem: Essai de théologie historique* (Kaslik, 1974), p. 38–43. It is still repeated by Ishō bar Nūn, see Clarke, *Selected Questions*, qu. 26, p. 31.

**111** This word is added in the margin.

**112** See Gen 22. For the Syriac interpretation of the offering of Isaac, see S.P. Brock, "Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition", in P. Casetti, *et al.*, *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy: Études Bibliques offertes à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire* (Göttingen, 1981), p. 1–30; and G.J. Reinink, "The lamb on the tree. Syriac exegesis and anti-Islamic apologetics", in E. Noort and E. Tichelaar (eds), *The Sacrifice of Isaac. The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations* (Leiden, 2002), p. 109–24. See also N. Calder, "From Midrash to Scripture: The Sacrifice of Abraham in Early Islamic Tradition", *Le Muséon* 101 (1988), p. 375–402.

ܗܕܐ ܕܥܡܗ ܐܬܐ. ܒܪ ܥܠ ܐܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܟ ܡܫܘܚܐ. ܕܥܡ ܨܠܒܐ ܘܒܩܒܪܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܐ ܐܬܥܢܐ ܘܠܐ ܐܬܦܓܥ. ܒܪ ܥܠ ܐܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܟ ܡܫܘܚܐ. ܕܥܡ ܨܠܒܐ ܘܒܩܒܪܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܐ ܐܬܥܢܐ ܘܠܐ ܐܬܦܓܥ: ܗܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܡܕܒܚܐ. ܙܒܢ ܕܐܬܩܛܠ ܐܝܣܚܩ ܒܪ ܐܒܪܗܡ. ܗܐ ܕܐܬܩܛܠ ܐܝܣܚܩ ܒܪ ܐܒܪܗܡ. ܗܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܡܕܒܚܐ. ܙܒܢ

[22] ܐܡܪ ܡܢ ܚܙܐ ܗܘ ܒܗ ܐܠܐ ܠܐ ܒܡܙܓܐ ܘܒܒܠܒܘܠ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܐܠܐ ܒܨܒܝܢܐ. ܘܐܝܟ ܕܐܬ ܠܐ ܢܓܥ ܘܠܐ ܐܬܐܠܡ. ܘܐܝܟ ܕܐܬ ܠܐ ܐܬܚܒܠ ܘܠܐ ܐܬܐܠܡ. ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܫܡܫܐ ܠܐ ܡܬܙܥܙܥ ܥܠ ܟܘܬܠܐ ܘܐܢܬ ܢܣܒ ܡܥܕܪܐ ܘܡܚܪܒ ܠܟܘܬܠܐ ܘܫܡܫܐ ܠܐ ܡܬܙܥܙܥ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܐܠܡ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܦܓܪܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܢ ܝܗ ܡܝܬ ܘܐܬܩܒܪ ܘܩܡ ܘܗܘ ܥܡ ܗܘ ܠܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܠܐ ܐܬܐܠܡ. ܘܐܝܟ ܕܦܪܙܠܐ ܕܡܫܕܝܢ ܒܢܘܪܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܫܩܝܢ ܒܡܝܐ ܐܠܐ ܒܙܒܢ ܐܚܕ ܕܐܢܘܢ ܒܥܝܢ ܡܫܟܚܘ ܠܗ ܘܡܒܥܝ ܠܗ ܘܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܘܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܘܡܫܟܚ

[23] ܡܫܡ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ ܠܒܝ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ ܠܐ ܫܪܝܪ ܐܠܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܗܘ ܕܡܬܕܡܐ ܠܗ ܘܠܐ ܫܪܝܪ ܗܘ ܕܬܫܬܟܚ ܐܢܬ ܕܕܒܚܐ ܐܢ ܒܥܝܬ ܠܟ ܥܠ ܐܒܪܗܡ ܐܘ ܐܢ ܒܥܝܬ ܠܟ ܥܠ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܦ ܗܘ ܐܬܕܒܚ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ ܘܐܢܬ ܡܣܗܕ ܠܗ ܕܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ.

[23] The Muslim says: My mind agrees with what you say because there is a similarity. But it is not right that you should forget the mention of sacrifice, – either, if you wish, concerning Abraham, or, if you would prefer, concerning Christ, for He also, as you say,[123] was indeed sacrificed, and you testify that He is the Son of God.

[24] ܡܫܡ ܐܡܪ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܐܢܬ ܘܫܦܝܪ ܗܘ ܩܘܪܒܢܢ ܐܢ ܬܣܬܟܠ ܒܗ ܕܒܗ ܐܢܚܢ ܚܕܝܢ ܒܟܠ ܝܘܡ.

[24] The Monk says: He is right and well our sacrifice, if you consider, for it is in Him that we take delight every day.

[25] ܡܫܡ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ ܒܡܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܐ.

[25] The Muslim says: In what way?

[26] ܡܫܡ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܢ ܐܒܪܗܡ ܥܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܩܪܒ[124] ܐܠܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܩܕܡ ܕܐܬܚܒܠ ܠܩܚ ܠܚܡܐ ܒܝܕܘܗܝ ܩܕܫܝܢ ܘܒܪܟ ܘܦܠܓ ܘܝܗܒ ܠܬܠܡܝܕܘܗܝ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܗܕܐ ܗܘ ܦܓܪܝ ܕܐܢܐ ܐܬܝܗܒ ܥܠ ܨܠܒܐ ܘܡܬܩܛܠ ܐܢܐ ܘܩܡ ܒܬܠܬ ܝܘܡܝܢ ܘܐܬܚܝܐ ܐܢܐ ܘܐܬܐ ܠܘܬ ܐܒܝ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܢܐ ܘܐܬܐ ܘܐܬܒ ܥܡ ܐܒܝ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܢܬ ܐܢܬ ܒܪܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ.

[26] The Monk says: Because from Abraham to Christ (sacrifices were offered). But Christ, before He suffered, took bread in His holy hands, and blessed and broke and gave (it) to His disciples, and

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be hammered and beaten by a smith, this in no way affects the fire with which it is united. Such a usage might have been expected here, but although the Syriac of this passage is far from clear, this does not seem to be the case. Instead, the argument seems to be that just as the fire improves and transforms the iron to which it is united, so the divinity of the eternal Son improves and transforms the humanity to which it is united. A very similar argument can be found in the letters of Catholicos Timothy: e.g. letter 1, ed. O. Braun, *Timothei patriarchae I epistulae* (CSCO 74: Louvain, 1914), p. 14, line 6–10: "For just as when iron is thrown into a fire, the iron does not bestow coldness and blackness on the fire, but rather fire bestows both illumination and heat on the iron". (ܐܝܟ ܕܒܙܒܢ ܕܢܫܕܘܢ ܠܦܪܙܠܐ ܒܢܘܪܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܪܝ ܦܪܙܠܐ ܠܢܘܪܐ ܩܪܝܪܘܬܐ ܘܫܘܚܪܐ ܐܠܐ ܢܘܪܐ ܡܫܪܝ ܠܦܪܙܠܐ ܬܪܝܨܘܬܐ ܘܚܡܝܡܘܬܐ ܕܢܘܪܐ: See also letter 2 (ed. Braun, p. 41, line 9–11).

**123** As is well known, Islamic tradition does not believe that Jesus died on the cross: see G.C. Anawati, "ʿĪsā", EI2.

**124** A few words appear to have dropped out of the text here: perhaps ܕܬܫ ܐܬܩܪܒ "sacrifices were offered" (and so omitted by homoioteleuton, due to ܠܩܚ ?).

ܗܕܐ ܗܘ ܦܓܪܝ ܕܡܬܒܪ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܟܘܢ. ܘܩܒܠܘ ܘܟܠܘ ܡܢܗ ܟܠܟܘܢ. ܘܢܗܘܐ ܠܟܘܢ ܠܡܚܘܠ ܠܟܘܢ ܥܠ ܚܛܗܐ ܕܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܟܘܢ. ܘܟܕ ܥܒܕ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܗܘ ܒܟܣܐ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܐܡܪ ܗܕܐ ܗܘ ܕܡܝ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܡܬܐ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܟܘܢ ܠܡܚܘܠ ܠܟܘܢ ܥܠ ܚܛܗܐ ܘܥܠ ܥܘܠܐ. ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܥܒܕܘ ܠܘܟܪܢܐ ܕܝ. ܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܕܬܐܟܠܘܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܦܬܐ ܗܕܐ ܘܬܫܬܘܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܟܣܐ ܗܕܐ ܬܗܘܐ ܠܟܘܢ ܠܗܘܪܢ ܥܕ ܕܐܬܐ ܕܝ. ܐܝܬ ܠܟܘܢ ܒܗ ܚܝܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ ܘܠܥܠܡ ܥܠܡܝܐ. ܐܡܝܢ.

said: "This is my body which is broken for your sakes. Take and eat of it, all of you. And let it be for you for the remission of debts". And likewise He also gave thanks over the cup, and said: "This is my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Take and drink of it, all of you. So do in commemoration of me. Whenever, therefore, you eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, you shall recall my death until my (second) coming."[126]

ܗܟܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܥܕ ܗܫܐ ܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܫܬܥܫܥ ܒܩܘܪܒܢܗ ܕܝ. ܚܛܐ ܗܘ ܕܚܢܛܐ ܘܚܡܪܐ ܗܘ ܕܓܦܢܐ ܘܒܡܨܥܝܬܐ ܕܟܗܢܐ ܘܒܪܘܚ ܩܕܫܐ ܡܬܥܒܕ ܦܓܪܗ ܘܕܡܗ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܗܘ ܡܫܠܡ ܠܢ ܘܐܢܚܢܢ ܡܬܚܪܪܝܢ ܡܢ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܒܗܡܬܐ ܘܡܢ ܐܣܝܪܘܬܐ ܕܕܡܐ ܐܦ ܗܟܢܐ ܕ27or| ܟ. ܡܢ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܒܗܡܬܐ ܘܡܢ ܐܣܝܪܘܬܐ ܕܕܡܐ.

And so, from Christ until now, all Christians take delight in His sacrifice. The bread is of wheat, and the wine is of the vine, and by the mediation of priests and through the Holy Spirit it becomes the body and blood of Christ, just as He entrusted to us. And we are freed from | animal sacrifices and from bloodshed, as

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**125** By error the manuscript reads ܐܡܪ (P2M perfect) instead of ܐܡܪܐ (PM participle with P2M enclitic pronoun) which is required by grammar and context.

**126** Comparison with Mt 26:26–28, Mk 14:22–24, Lk 22:17–20, 1 Cor 11:24–25, reveals that this is not a citation of any one New Testament account of the Last Supper. It therefore seems likely that it is taken from an East Syriac eucharistic liturgy. Of the three major anaphoras, that of Addai and Mari has no words of institution, and that of Theodore of Mopsuestia is significantly different in form. The anaphora of Nestorius, however, has a form of Christ's words which matches very closely with those recorded here. (The Maronite "Sharrar" has a related form, reworded as a direct address to Christ.) Although the anaphora of Nestorius, in its Syriac form, is thought to date back to the 6th century, the earliest manuscript witness to the anaphora dates to the 10th/11th century, and so this citation is of some importance. For an excellent overview, plus an English translation, see B.D. Spinks, *Mar Nestorius and Mar Theodore the Interpreter: The Forgotten Eucharistic Prayers of East Syria* (Alcuin Club / GROW Joint Liturgical Studies 45; Cambridge, 1999). For a detailed commentary, see R. Matheus, *The Order of the Third Sanctification* (OIRSI; Kottayam, 2000).

ܕܡܝܗ ܠܟܘ ܕܡܫ. ܚܣܝܗ ܒܚܢ
ܕܡܝ. ܕܠܐ ܐܟܠ ܐܢ ܒܣܪ ܕܥܓܠܐ.
ܘܕܡܐ ܕܓܕܝܐ ܠܐ ܐܫܬܐ ܐܢ.

the Spirit foretold by the mouth of the blessed David: "I will not eat the flesh of calves, and the blood of kids I will not drink".[127]

[27] ܐܡܪ ܗܟܝܠ ܐܢ ܐܡܪ[.] ܒܫܢ
ܕܒܐ. ܐܝܟ ܐܡܪ[.] ܗܘܐ ܗܕܐ ܕܒ
ܟܠ. ܚܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܢ ܘܡܟܠ
ܐܠܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܬܠ. ܘܒܟܠ
ܐܠܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܚܘܪ. ܘܠܐ
ܒܟܠ ܐܠܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܚܕ

ܘܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܢܥܒܕ ܐܢܫܐ ܒܨܠܡܢ ܘܕܡܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܝܢ[130] ܕܐܡܪ ܢܢܚܬ ܘܢܒܠܒܠ ܬܡܢ ܠܫܢܝܗܘܢ. ܘܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܚܙܐ ܒܗܝܟܠܐ ܕܣܪܦܐ ܕܩܪܝܢ ܩܕܝܫ ܩܕܝܫ ܩܕܝܫ. ܡܪܝ ܚܝܠ ܡܠܝܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ ܒܫܒܚܬܗ. ܗܘ ܡܐܡܪܐ ܕܒܗ ܐܬܪܫܡ ܨܠܡܐ ܕܬܠܝܬܝܬܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ.

And we know Him in threefold manner, both from that (passage): "Let us make man in our image according to our likeness";[131] and from that (one): "Let us go down and there divide (their) languages";[132] and from the fact that the prophet saw in the midst of the temple the seraphim crying "Holy, holy, holy! Mighty Lord! Heaven and earth are filled with His praises!"[133] It is this utterance which bears the symbol of the Holy Trinity.[134]

ܘܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܒܙܒܢ ܡܥܡܕܗ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܗܘܬ ܬܡܗܐ ܪܒܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܠܡܐܡܪ. ܕܒܪܐ ܕܐܬܡܥܡܕ ܗܘ ܒܪܗ ܕܚܝܒܐ ܗܘ. ܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܢܚܬ ܗܘ ܒܗ. ܘܐܒܐ ܕܩܪܐ ܘܣܗܕ ܡܢ ܠܥܠ ܗܢܐ ܗܘ ܒܪܝ ܚܒܝܒܝ ܕܒܗ ܣܒܝܬ ܐܢܐ. ܘܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܠܝ ܐܢܐ ܣܠܩ ܠܘܬ ܐܒܐ ܕܫܕܪܢܝ. ܘܐܫܕܪ ܠܟܘܢ ܐܬ ܪܘܚܐ ܕܫܪܪܐ ܕܢܫܠܡ ܠܟܘܢ ܒܟܠ ܚܝܠܐ. ܘܐܙܠܘ ܬܠܡܕܘ ܠܟܠ ܥܡܡܐ. ܘܡܥܡܕܢ ܐܢܘܢ ܒܫܡܗ ܕܐܒܐ ܘܕܒܪܐ ܘܕܪܘܚܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ. ܘܠܡܢܛܪܢ ܐܢܘܢ ܠܟܠ ܡܐ ܕܦܩܕܬܟܘܢ.

And from the fact that when Christ was baptised there was a great wonder that is ineffable: the Son who was baptised, and the Spirit who descended, and the Father who cried out and bore witness from above, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am pleased".[135] And in accordance with that which He said: "I am ascending to my Father who sent me,[136] and I will send to you the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who will perfect you in all powers".[137] And "Go forth (and) make disciples of the

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**130** This word was added in the margin.

**131** Gen 1:26. (This traditional Christian proof text, and the following one, depend upon the fact that God speaks in the first person plural, "we", suggesting simultaneous unity and plurality.)

**132** Gen 11:7.

**133** Isa 6:3. (Isaiah mentions one Lord, but reports a triple sanctus, "holy!", indicating the Trinity.)

**134** Since the previous passages only indicate unity and plurality, not the threefold plurality.

**135** Mt 3:16–17.

**136** See Jn 16:5.

**137** See Jn 14:26 – a very loose paraphrase.

four quarters (of the world), and baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."[138]

ܐܝܟ ܕܫܡܫܐ ܚܕ ܗܘ ܒܪܝܬ ܘܡܢܗ ܢܦܩ ܢܘܗܪܐ
270v| ܘܚܡܐ ܘܐܦ ܐܢܫܐ ܚܕ ܗܘ ܐܠܐ ܡܪܟܒ ܡܢ ܓܪܡܐ ܘܣܥܪܐ ܘܫܥܪܐ. ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܐܠܗܐ ܚܕ ܗܘ ܕܡܬܝܕܥ ܒܬܠܬ ܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܡܦܪܫ ܒܬܠܬ ܦܪܨܘܦܐ ܘܡܬܚܙܐ. ܘܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܚܡ ܒܙܒܢܐ ܣܬܐ ܘܢܬܚܡܡ ܘܢܬܗܢܐ ܡܢ ܚܡܝܬܗ ܘܐܢ ܢܫܠܚ ܐܝܕܗ ܒܗ ܘܢܚܩܪ ܒܛܒܝܥܬܗ ܢܬܚܪܩ ܒܗ. ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܐܢܚܢ ܡܘܕܝܢ ܒܬܠܬ ܩܢܘܡܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܬܦܝܣ ܠܥܠ ܐܚܕ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܦܠܓ ܘܐܢ ܡܢ ܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܢܫܠܚ ܠܡܚܩܪ ܘܠܡܕܥ ܒܗ ܢܬܚܪܩ ܘܚܝܘܗܝ ܢܬܦܣܩ. ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܐܢܫ ܩܠܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܠܡܕܥ ܠܡܢ ܕܥܒܕܗ ܐܘ ܡܢ ܐܝܟ ܐܬܐ ܐܢܬ ܗܘ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܛܒܝܥܬ ܥܒܕ ܠܐ ܡܬܝܕܥܐ ܠܡܢ ܕܐܬܥܒܕ.

And just as the sun is a single sphere, and from it proceed | illumination and warmth, (and) a human also is one, but is composed of bones and flesh and hair, so also God is one, and is known in three persons (*qnōmē*), and they are distinguished by their particular properties. And just as someone might light a fire in winter time, and warm himself and benefit from its heat, but if he should extend his hand into it and investigate its nature he will be burnt by it, so also we confess the Trinity, as it was delineated above, to be one and indivisible,[140] and it is proclaimed and confessed in threefold manner, and whoever (so) believes and confesses is further enlightened by it, but if someone should investigate and pry (into it) he will surely be burnt and his life shall be brought to an end. For just as a potter's vessel is not able to judge that which pertains to his fashioner or the origin of his existence,[141] so also the nature of the Maker is not known by those who are made.

**138** Mt 28:19.

**139** By scribal error the manuscript reads ܡܢܟܣ.

**140** The Syriac word "Trinity" (*tlītāyutā*) is feminine, but all the forms here are masculine, either through erroneous grammatical incongruence, or because the writer has the masculine noun "God" (*ʾalāhā*) as his mental subject.

**141** See Isa 29:16, 64:8; Rom 9:21.

ܘܐܦ ܕܐܡܪܬ ܠܡܢܐ ܡܫܬܟܚ ܠܟ ܕܢܝܠܕ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܐܢܬ ܒܪ ܝܫܡܥܐܝܠ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܬ ܥܒܕ ܠܗ ܕܩܪܝ ܠܗ ܐܢܬ ܥܝܣܐ ܒܪ ܡܪܝܡ ܘܠܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܗܘ ܕܢ.

And (as for) that which you said, "Why do you produce a son for (God)?", tell me, you son of Ishmael, whose son do you make him, he who is called by you ʿĪsā son of Mariam,[142] and by us Jesus Christ?

[29] ܐܡܪ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ ܕܢ[.] ܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܣܗܕܝܢ ܠܡܐ ܕ[ܐܡܪ ]ܢ[143] ܠܡܚܡܕ ܢܒܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܗܘ ]ܐ[: ܡܠܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܘܪܘܚܗ ܗܘ.

[29] The Muslim says: According to Muḥammad our (prophet), – we also bear witness to what he said, – (He is): "The Word of God and His Spirit".[144]

[30] ܐܡܪ ܢܙܝܪܝܐ ܕܢ[.] ܫܦܝܪ ܐܢܬ ܕܐܡܪܬ ܐܠܐ ܡܢ ܣܒܪ ܠܡܚܡܕ ܐܬܐ ܗܢܐ ܡܢ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܠܘܩܐ ❖ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܓܒܪܐܝܠ ❖ ܒܫܥܬܐ ܕܒܫܪ ܠܡܪܝܡ ܒܬܘܠܬܐ. ܫܠܡ ܥܠܝܟ ܡܠܝܐ ܢܣܒܐ ܡܪܢ ܥܡܟ ܒܪܟ ܐܢܬ ܒܢܫ̈ܐ. ܠܡܐ ܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܢܐܬܐ ܥܠܝܟ ܘܚܝܠܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܢܬܟܠ ܥܠܝܟ. ܡܛܠ ܗܢܐ ܕܐܦ

[30] The Monk says: And you speak well! But Muḥammad received this saying from the Gospel of Luke, in accordance with what the angel Gabriel proclaimed (when) he declared it to the Blessed Mary:[145] "Peace be with you, who are full of grace! And our Lord is with you, blessed among women! For the Holy Spirit shall come, and the power of the Most High[146] shall rest upon you. Because

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**142** There is considerable discussion of the origins of the Islamic name for Jesus: see G.C. Anawati, "ʿĪsā", EI2; N. Robinson, "Jesus", in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 2003), p. 7–21. Jesus is described as "son of Mary" twenty-three times in the Qurʾān.

**143** Conjectural addition by the editor; see § 31 below.

**144** See Q 4:171. On this much discussed passage, see the articles on Jesus in the Islamic tradition cited above. In the *Legend of Sergius Baḥira* 14.14, it is Sergius who is said the have taught this definition to Muḥammad: for an excellent discussion of this see B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, p. 104–113.

**145** "The Blessed Mary" (*ṭubānītā Maryam*) is a classic Church of the East title for Jesus' mother. Chalcedonian Syriac (Byzantine Orthodox) and Miaphysite Syriac (Syrian Orthodox) texts normally refer to her as "the God-bearer", *yāldat ʾalāhā* (corresponding to the Greek Θεοτόκος), but this was unacceptable to Church of the East theologians.

**146** Literally "the High one", "the Exalted one".

ܗܝ ܕܐܬܝܠܕ ܡܢܟ ܘܩܕܝܫ ܐܝܬ ܘܒܪ ܥܠܝܐ ܢܬܩܪܐ ܐܡܪ. ܘܗܫܐ ܚܙܝ ܡܢܬ ܘܫܡܥ ܡܐ ܕܫܡܥܬ ܡܢ ܡܚܡܕ ܕܐܦ ܗܘ ܡܣܗܕ ܠܗ ܕܗܘ ܐܡܪ ܕܗܘ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܘܪܘܚܗ. ܘܗܫܐ ܐܢܐ ܒܥܐ ܡܢܟ ܕܚܕ ܡܢ ܬܪܝܢ ܕܐܢ ܐܦ ܡܫܬܩܠ ܐܢܬ ܡܢ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܘܪܘܚܗ 271r| ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܝܠܕ ܘܐܢ ܡܐ ܕܫܪܝܬ ܐܢܬ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܝܠܕ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܒܫܪܪܐ.

of this, He who shall be born of you is holy, and He shall be called the Son of the Most High".[147] Now, consider your saying, and understand what you have heard from Muḥammad, because you bear witness that he proclaimed Him to be "the Word of God and His Spirit". Now, I require one of two things from you; either you alienate | the Word of God and His Spirit from Him, or you correctly proclaim Him to be the Son of God.

[31] ܡܣܠܡܝܐ ܐܡܪ. ܗܐ ܗܪ ܐܢ ܒܥܝ ܠܡܣܬܪ ܒܫܬܝܩܐ. ܐܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܫܪܪܐ ܡܢ ܡܚܡܕ ܢܒܝܢ ܕܐܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܗܘ ܒܥܝܢܟ.

[31] The Muslim says: Here we must take refuge in silence! But tell me the truth, Muḥammad our prophet, how is he reckoned in your eyes?

[32] ܡܢܣܟ ܐܡܪ. ܓܒܪܐ ܚܟܝܡ ܘܕܚܠ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܦܪܩܟ ܡܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܕܫܐܕܐ ܘܐܦ ܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܕܬܕܥ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܫܪܪܐ ܚܕ.

[32] The Monk says: A wise and God-fearing man, who freed you from the worship of demons, and caused you to know the one true God.

[33] ܡܣܠܡܝܐ ܐܡܪ. ܘܡܛܥܡܐ ܗܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܟܝܡ ܗܘ ܡܢ ܫܪܝܬܐ ܠܐ ܐܠܦ ܠܢ ܐܦ ܠܐ ܒܪܡ ܡܢ ܗܕܐ ܕܪܙܐ ܕܬܠܬܝܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ.

[33] The Muslim says: And (so) for what reason, given that he was wise, did he not teach us from the beginning[148] about the mystery of the Trinity as you term (it)?

147 Lk 1:28, 35 (some variants from Peshiṭta text).

148 This goes against the punctuation, which seems to read "given that he was wise from the beginning", but it fits better with the reply that follows.

[34] ܫܐܠ ܗܘ ܒܪ ܐܢܫܐ [.] ܕܝܠܡܐ ܕܟܕ ܐܬܝܠܕ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܠܡ ܠܗ ܚܘܫܒܢܐ ܕܡܢ ܡܐܟܠܬܐ ܡܢ ܬܪܥ ܫܢܝܢ ܡܬܪܥܐ ܠܗ ܚܠܒܐ ܘܒܗܝܢ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܠܗ ܡܐܟܠܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܚܡܐ. ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܡܘܚܡܕ ܕܚܙܐ ܛܦܫܘܬܟ ܘܚܣܪ ܝܕܥܬܟ ܐܫܪܐ ܠܟ ܐܠܗܐ ܚܕ ܕܩܒܠ ܡܢ ܣܪܓܝܣ ܒܚܝܪܐ. ܡܛܠ ܕܐܢܬ ܛܦܠ ܗܘܝܬ ܒܝܕܥܬܐ ܠܐ ܐܠܦ ܠܟ ܒܪܙ ܬܠܝܬܝܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܬܙܠ ܒܬܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܣܓܝܐܐ. ܐܡܪ ܐܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܡܘܚܡܕ ܬܠܬ ܐܬܪ ܐܦ ܫܒܥ ܢܣܝܡ ܕܥܣܪ ܐܦ ܥܠ ܓܒ ܚܝܠ ܐܢ ܗܘܝܬ ܐܙܠ ܒܬܪ ܥܒܕܐ ܕܨܠܡܐ ܐܦ ܟܕ ܩܕܡ.

[34] The Monk says: You should know, O man, that a child when he is born, because he does not possess fully-formed[149] senses (capable) of receiving whole food, they feed him with milk for two years, and (only) then do they give him food (consisting) of bread.[150] So also Muḥammad, because he saw your childishness and your lack of knowledge, he first caused you to know the one true God, – teaching which he received from Sergius Baḥira.[151] Because you were childlike in knowledge he did not teach you about the mystery of the Trinity, so that you should not go astray after multiple gods. For you might perhaps have said, "Since Muḥammad proclaimed three, let us make seven others, since ten would be even more powerful!", and (so) you would have run after the worship of carved-idols, as previously.

[35] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ [.] ܐܢܐ ܚܙܝ ܐܢܐ ܕܡܠܬܐ ܗܕܐ ܩܫܝܐ ܠܝ ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܕܒܪܝܬܐ ܢܫܬܒܘܩ ܠܗ ܕܢܫܬܒܘܩ ܒܪܝܬܐ ܒܡܟܝܢ ܕܥܒܕܐ ܕܨܠܡܐ ܢܫܬܒܘܩ ܒܡܟܝܢ ܕܥܒܕܐ ܕܒܪܝܬܐ ܐܚܪܢܝܬܐ.

[35] The Muslim says: As I see it, this matter is exceedingly difficult, that the Creator should replace the worship of carved-idols with the worship of created things.

[36] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ [.] ܫܪܪ ܐܢܬ ܡܢ ܓܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܕܐܒܕܢܐ ܕܓܡܝܪ.

[36] The Monk says: Truly, it (would be a cause) of total perdition!

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**149** Literally "whole", "healthy".

**150** See Heb 5:12–14; 1 Cor 3:2.

**151** Sergius Baḥira is the Christian monk said in Islamic tradition to have acknowledged Muḥammad's prophetic status, and in Christian tradition to have been Muḥammad's tutor. See Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*.

[37] ܡܘܫܠܡܐ ܐܡܪ ]. ܗܟܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܬ ܥܒܕ ܨܠܡ̈ܐ ܘܨܠܒ̈ܐ ܘܓܪ̈ܡܝ ]ܩ̈ܕܝܫ̈ܐ[ ]ܨܠܡܐ[[152] ܕܩ̈ܫܝܫ̈ܐ ܕܥܒ̈ܕ ܐܢܬ ܥܠ ܕܟ̈ܝ ܕܩ̈ܫܝܫ̈ܐ.

[37] The Muslim says: So then, your practice is difficult (to justify), that you worship images, and crosses, and the bones of martyrs![153]

[38] ܡܢܪܐ ܐܡܪ ]. ܓܒܪܐ ܕܝܠܗ ܘܩܪܝܐ ܕܟ̈ܬ̈ܒ̈ܐ ܠܐ ܢܬܟܠܡ ܒܣܟܠ̈ܐ ܐܠ̈ܐ ܢܒܥܐ ܘܢܫܐܠ ܘܢܬܟܠܡ ܕܟܕ ܡܬܡܠܠ ܠܐ ܢܬܬܒܥܪ ܥܠ ܡܠܝܗ ܡܢ ܫܡܥ̈ܘܗܝ.

[38] The Monk says: A rational man and a reader of books[154] should not speak haphazardly, but should (first) do some research and then speak, so that when he speaks he will not be criticised by his hearers!

[39] ܡܘܫܠܡܐ ܐܡܪ ]. ܠܐ 271v| ܐܦ̈ܝܠ ܕܥܠ ܓܒܪܐ ܕܠܝܬ ܠܗ ܝܕܥܬܐ ܡܕܡ ܕܡܫܬܐܠ ܘܠܡܬܥܠܡ ܥܠ ܗܝ ܡܠܬܐ.

[39] The Muslim says: I do not | believe that any criticism (can be levelled) against a person who is ignorant about a matter, and seeks to question and to learn about it.

[40] ܡܢܪܐ ܐܡܪ ]. ܐܢ ܨܒܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܡܫܡܥ ܫܡܥ ܒܓܠܝ ܘܩܒܠ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܡܕ ܐܝܬܝ ܡܣܬܒܪ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܟܬܒ̈ܐ ܩܕܝܫ̈ܐ ܘܡܢ ܢܒܝ̈ܐ.

[40] The Monk says: If you seek to learn, listen clearly, and accept whatever I adduce for you as proof from the Torah[155] and the prophets.

[41] ܡܘܫܠܡܐ ܐܡܪ ]. ܩܒܠ ܐܩܒܠ ܡܢ ܟܬܒ̈ܐ ܕܩ̈ܕܡ̈ܝܐ ]ܗ̈ܝ[.

[41] The Muslim says: Truly, I will accept a proof (taken) from the Old (Testament).

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**152** The manuscript reads, by error, ܨܠܡܐ ("image", singular).

**153** For the discussion which follows, and its possible socio-historical background, see the full discussion in Reinink, "The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs" (2011) [see n. 1 above].

**154** Or possibly "the Scriptures".

**155** The standard Syriac term for Torah, *ʾōrāytā* (ܐܘܪܝܬܐ), is cognate with the Hebrew term and is borrowed from Jewish Aramaic.

[42] ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܡܢܝܬ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܗܠ ܥܒܕܘ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܥܒܕ ܐܝܕܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܐܘ ܠܐ.

[42] The Monk says: So then, tell me, did the Hebrews worship the work of (human) hands, or not?

[43] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܥܒܕܘ ܗܟܝ ܐܠܐ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܥܒܕܘ ܗܘ ܟܕ ܗܘ ܕܥܒܕܝ ܐܬܝܗܒ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܘܢܫ ܕܝܢܐ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ.

[43] The Muslim says: Truly they (so) worshipped. But whenever they were (so) worshipping they would receive a judgement of punishment.[156]

[44] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܢܝܬ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܠܐ ܗܟܝ ܗܘ ܕܥܒܕܘ ܐܠܐ ܕܐܬܦܪܩܘ ܡܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܫܡܥ ܘܠܐ ܚܙܐ.

[44] The Monk says: (So) it is not the case that they worshipped and (so) were delivered by dumb objects?[157]

[45] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܐ ܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ. ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܝܕܥ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܐܢܬ ܗܒ ܠܝ.

[45] The Muslim says: I do not know. If you know, tell me!

[46] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܢܝܬ ܐܡܪ ܠܐ ܫܡܥܬ ܐܦ ܩܪܝܬ ܕܐܬܐ ܥܡܘܕܐ ܕܢܘܪܐ ܐܙܠ ܩܕܡ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܟܕ ܢܦܩܘ ܡܡܨܪܝܢ. ܘܗܘ ܥܡܘܕܐ ܢܗܪ ܠܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܘܚܫܟ ܠܡܨܪܝܐ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܕܝܕܥ ܐܢܬ ܕܗܟܢܐ ܥܡܘܕܐ ܗܘ ܢܗܪ ܠܒܝܬܐ ܘܚܫܟ ܠܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܠܐ ܒܝܬܐ

[46] The Monk says: I have heard, and have also read, that a pillar of light travelled before the children of Israel when they went out from Egypt,[158] which gave light to the Hebrews but made darkness for the Egyptians. And know, that just as that pillar gave light for those of the household,[159] and made darkness for the

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**156** The Muslim presumably has in mind, primarily, the story of the golden calf which was worshipped by the Israelites while Moses was on the mountain: see Ex 32. The story is mentioned five times in the Qur'ān. See G.R. Hawting, "Calf of Gold", in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 2001), p. 273–276.

**157** See Ps 115:5, Isa 46:7, Jer 10:5, 1 Cor 12:2.

**158** See Ex 13:21; 14:19–20; Josh 24:7. The biblical texts describe the pillar as a "pillar of fire" (*nurā*, ܢܘܪܐ), rather than as a "pillar of light" (*nuhrā*, ܢܘܗܪܐ) as here.

**159** This substantive adjective *baytāyā* "of the house", hence "member of the household", could apply in this instance to the "house of Israel", but the term was developed in Syriac Christian usage to indicate someone who belongs to "the household of God", in other words a believer. This concept is contrasted, as here, by the adjective *barāyā*, an "outsider", one who is outside the

ܟܕ ܐܦ ܡܫܝܚܢ ܡܪܢ ܒܡܬܝ ܒܩܝܡܬܐ ܕܬܬܐ ܢܬܪܓܝ ܠܗ ܘܢܩܒܠ ܠܥܒܕܘܗܝ ܘܢܥܢܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܡܗܝܡܢܝܢ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ.

outsiders, so also our Lord Christ when He comes at the (general) resurrection will long for and receive his worshippers, but will reply to the unbelievers, saying: "I do not know you".[160]

ܘܐܝܟ ܕܢܚܫܐ ܕܢܚܫ ܡܘܫܐ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܢܫܟܝܢ ܡܢ ܚܝܬܐ ܒܚܙܝܬܗ ܗܘܐ ܚܝ ܟܕ ܢܫܟܝܢ ܡܢ ܫܐܛܢ ܗܟܢܐ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܡܬܦܓܥ ܒܗ ܡܢ ܫܐܛܢ ܟܕ ܩܪܒ ܒܥܝܢ ܒܚܫܐ ܘܒܪܚܡܐ ܘܣܓܕ ܩܕܡ ܨܠܒܐ ܗܘ ܢܬܦܪܩ ܡܢ ܫܐܛܢ ܒܪܚܡܝ ܡܪܝ ܨܠܒܐ.

And just as that bronze serpent which Moses set up in the wilderness, anyone who was bitten by a snake would be saved when he gazed upon it,[161] so (also) anyone who is wounded by Satan,[162] whenever he draws near, in suffering and remorse, and worships before the cross, he will be saved from Satan, through the aid of the mercy of the Lord of the cross.

ܘܐܝܟ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܒܪ ܢܘܢ ܟܕ ܢܦܠ ܦܓܪܗ ܩܕܡ ܐܪܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ ܕܡܪܝ ܟܠ ܐܪܥܐ ܗܘܐ ܩܒܠ ܚܝܠ ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܛܝܒܘܬܐ ܘܗܘܐ ܡܬܟܒܫ ܟܠ ܒܥܠܝ ܕܒܪ ܡܢ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܟܗܢܐ ܟܕ ܢܦܠ ܦܓܪܗ ܩܕܡ ܡܕܒܚܐ ܕܡܪܝ ܗܘ ܡܩܒܠ ܚܝܠ ܘܥܘܕܪܢܐ ܩܕܡ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܒܥܠܝ ܕܒܪ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܡܬܩܪܒ ܠܘܬ ܡܕܒܚܐ ܕ272r| ܡܪܝ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܡܬܩܒܠ ܥܘܕܪܢܐ ܘܡܫܝܥܘܬܐ ܠܡܣܢܝ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܗܢܘܢ ܒܥܠܝ ܕܒܪ ܕܐܝܢܘܢ ܒܥܠܝ ܕܒܪ ܕܫܪܪܐ.

And just as Joshua bar Nun, whenever he cast himself down upon his face before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth,[163] he would receive power from the divine grace, and would subdue all his enemies, so also the priest when he casts himself down | upon his face before the altar of the Lord, (the altar) of Christ, he receives power and aid against the demons who are the enemies of truth.

household of God, or more specifically the church. This adjective thus came to be applied to anything or anyone considered secular, profane, or heathen.

**160** Lk 13:25, 27; see Mt 7:23.

**161** See Num 21:8–9. The typological link between the serpent raised up by Moses and the crucified Jesus is already found in Jn 3:14, and is regularly repeated in later Christian apologetic literature: see Reinink, "The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs", p. 333.

**162** Who is identified, of course, with the serpent in Paradise, Gen 3:1–5, 13–15.

**163** See Josh 7:6. The interpretation of the wooden ark as a type of the cross is also found in the

ܘܡܬܠ ܗܠܝܢ ܣܓܝܐܝ ܒܟܠ ܗܢ ܕܒܛܘܪ ܒܥܬܝܩ ܕܐܢ ܬܒܥ ܬܫܟܚ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܚܙܝܢ ܠܢ ܛܘܦܣ ܕܚܕܬܐ ܕܡܬܝܗܒ ܠܢ ܡܢ ܡܪܢ ܘܟܕ ܝܕܥܝܢ ܒܬܪܝܨ ܕܡܪܢ ܐܝܬ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܘܡܬܚܫܒ ܠܢ ܐܝܟ ܡܪܐ ܘܦܪܩܢ ܘܕܝܢ ܠܢ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܢ ܐܝܟ ܡܪܐ ܘܐܝܟ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܫܬܚܘܝܢ ܠܢ ܡܛܥܡ ܕܒܓܠܠ ܕܒܗ ܚܬܡ ܦܪܨܘܦܗ ܘܫܕܪ ܠܢ ܠܘܬ ܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܕܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܡܨܛܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܡܪܐ ܗܘ ܕܡܨܛܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܫܬܚܘܝܢ ܠܢ ܡܛܥܡ ܕܒܓܠܠ ܕܒܗ ܚܬܡ ܦܪܨܘܦܗ ܘܫܕܪ ܠܢ ܠܘܬ ܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܕܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܡܨܛܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܡܪܐ ܗܘ ܕܡܨܛܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܫܬܚܘܝܢ ܠܢ

And there are many proofs such as these in the foreshadowing of the Old (Testament) – if you investigate you will find them – which depict the type of the fulfilment of the new things which were given to us by our Lord. And when we know with certainty that our Lord is the Son of God, and (when) He is reckoned by us as Lord and Saviour and Judge, we must do whatever he commands us. And we worship and honour His image because He impressed (it) with His face and delivered it to us,[164] and whenever we look at his icon it is Him we see. And we honour the image of the king because of the king.

[47] ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܕܡܫܡܥܢܝ ܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܫܡܥܬ ܗܕܐ ܘܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܗܘ ܕܨܒܘܬ ܦܪܨܘܦܗ ܘܫܕܪ ܠܢ ܠܘܬ ܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܕܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܡܨܛܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܡܪܐ ܗܘ ܕܡܨܛܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܡܫܬܚܘܝܢ ܠܢ

[47] The Muslim says: And even I have heard (this), and I know that it is an icon that He impressed with His face and sent

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treatise on the cross published by P. Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita. De perfectione religiosa* (Paris / Leipzig, 1909), p. 589–600, esp. p. 591 line 11; J.P.M. van der Ploeg, "Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix", *Le Muséon* 56 (1943), p. 115–127; and the discussion in Reinink, "The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs", p. 333–334.

**164** This is an allusion (as the Muslim recognises in the next paragraph) to the image of Christ's face which, according to tradition, he impressed upon a cloth and sent to King Abgar of Edessa. This follows the narrative found in the *Acts of Mar Mari* § 3 – ed. A. Harrak, *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle* (Atlanta, 2005), p. 6–7 – rather than that in the *Doctrina Addai* f.3b–4a, ed. G. Howard, *The Teaching of Addai* (Chico, 1981), p. 8–11, where the portrait is painted by an artist named Ḥanan. Harrak tentatively dates the *Acts of Mar Mari* to the 6th century, though others have suggested a 7th-century date. See A. Cameron, "The History of the Image of Edessa: the Telling of a Story", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), p. 80–94; H.J.W. Drijvers, "The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition", in H.L. Kessler and G. Wolf (eds), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Villa Spelman Colloquia 6: Bologna, 1998), p. 13–31; Brock, "Transformations of the Edessa Portrait of Christ", JAAS 18.1 (2004), p. 46–56; S.H. Griffith, "Crosses, Icons and the Image of Christ in Edessa: The Place of Iconophobia in the Christian-Muslim Controversies of Early Islamic Times", in P. Rousseau and E. Papoutsakis (eds), *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown* (Aldershot, 2009), p .63–84.

ܕܐܒܓܪ. ܘܒܗ ܙܕܩ ܕܡܗܝܡܢ ܒܡܫܝܚܐ ܢܗܘܐ ܫܘܝܗ ܡܫܬܘܚܕ ܟܠܗ [ܫܠ]: ܐܠܐ ܡܢܐ ܠܡܐ ܠܐ ܦܩܕ ܒܗ ܒܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܝܠܟ. ܐܢ ܠܝ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܦ ܗܘ ܠܐ ܦܩܕ ܠܟ ܒܣܝܦܐ ܕܬܣܓܕ ܠܗ.

to Abgar, the king of Edessa, and it is right that all who believe in Christ should honour his image as (Christ in) his entirety. But for what reason do you worship the cross, since He does not command you (to do so) in his Gospel?

[48] ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܡܫܡܥ ܐܢܐ [.] ܐܦ ܒܕܝܠܟ ܡܘܚܡܕ ܠܐ ܠܡܕ ܟܠ ܢܡܘܣܘܗܝ ܘܦܘܩܕܢܝ ܕܐܠܗܟ ܘܒܣܦܪ ܩܘܪܝܐ ܐܝܬ ܒܗܘܢ ܕܐܢܬ ܝܕܥ ܡܢ ܩܘܪܝܐ[165]. ܘܒܗܘܢ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܗ[166] ܒܣܘܪܬ ܒܩܪܐ. ܘܒܟܒܘܬܐ[167] ܘܒܬܘܒ[168]. ܐܦ ܒܢ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܢ ܦܩܕܢܝ ܕܡܪܢ ܐܝܟ ܕ

ܗܕܐ. ܘܫܕܪ ܠܗ ܠܫܠܝܚܘܗܝ ܕܒܫܡܗ ܘܒܚܕ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܒܝܕ ܡܥܠܝܢ ܠܗ ܒܥܕܬܐ ܕܡܠܦܢܐ ܘܐܘܕܥ ܠܢ ܐܘܪܚܐ ܕܚܝܐ ܘܫܒܝܠܐ ܕܢܗܝܪܐ.

the Apostles his servants, and some of them he set up through the teachers (of the church), and he showed us the way of life[170] and the path of light.

ܘܠܥܠ ܙܩܦܐ ܐܫܡܥ ܒܫܪܪܐ ܕܡܣܓܕܝܢ ܠܙܩܦܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܒܗ ܐܬܦܪܩܢ ܡܢ ܛܥܘܬܐ ܘܒܗ ܐܬܚܪܪܢ ܡܢ ܡܘܬܐ ܘܡܢ ܣܛܢܐ. ܘܐܝܟ ܣܗܕܐ ܫܦܝܪܐ ܐܪܒܥ ܦܪܫܝ ܥܠܡܐ ܡܣܗܕ ܒܗ ܘܐܪܒܥ ܣܘܡܩܐ ܕܦܪܕܝܣܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܕܡܘܬܗ ܘܐܪܒܥ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܟܬܒܘ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܡܪܢ | ܢܫܩܠ ܕܡܘܬܗ ܘܠܘ ܐܝ ܠܐ ܢܫܩܠ ܘܠܐ ܢܚܘܐ ܘܠܐ ܢܛܝܪ ܐܝ ܠܐ ܢܫܩܠ ܘܢܚܘܐ ܘܢܛܝܪ ܠܡܘܬܗ ܘܒܪܢܫܐ ܒܦܫܛ ܐܝܕܘܗܝ ܡܫܟܚ ܕܛܘܦܣ ܘܦܪܚܐ ܘܥܣܒܐ ܡܩܒܠܝܢ ܡܘܬܗ.

272v

And as for the cross, listen honestly; we worship the cross because through it we were freed from error, and through it we were delivered from death and Satan. And (as) clear proofs, the four quarters (of the world) bear its sign,[171] and the four elements bear its symbol,[172] and the four rivers of paradise[173] depict its likeness, and the four Apostles who wrote down the Gospel of our Lord | carry its likeness; and a bird, unless it carries and depicts its likeness, it is unable to fly;[174] and a person, in the stretching out of his hands[175] bears its type; and flowers and blossoms and grasses receive its sign.

ܘܠܡܢܐ ܢܚܢܢ ܡܬܬܠܝܢ ܟܠ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܕܡܝܢ ܠܗ ܕܠܝܬ ܠܢ ܠܡܬܠ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܢ ܠܡܫܕܪ

And why are we mentioning all the things which are like it, when we should

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**170** The term "life" in Syriac is synonymous with "salvation".

**171** For another occurrence of this common type in the Syriac tradition, see Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 18:3, ed. E. Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide* (CSCO 154: Louvain, 1955), p. 70; and so also Narsai, Homily 30, ed. A. Mingana, *Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina* (Mosul, 1905), vol. II, p. 121.

**172** See also Narsai, Homily 30, ed. Mingana, II, p.121.

**173** See Gen 2:10–14.

**174** See Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 18:6 (ed. Beck, p. 70): "But if the bird gathers in its wings, / thus denying the extended symbol of the Cross, / then the air too will deny the bird: / the air will not carry the bird / unless its wings confess the Cross": translation by S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (2nd ed.; Kalamazoo, 1992), p. 59.

**175** Possibly when praying with outstretched arms, but Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 18:12 (ed. Beck, p. 71) states that the type is present even when a person stretches out his arms to put on his tunic.

ܠܡܢܠܟ ܥܕܙܐ. ܒܥܢܐ ܕܐ
ܡܐܙܒܝ. ܘܚܫܐ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܐ
ܡܐܗܝ. ܘܟܬܐ ܕܐ ܡܐܒܝ.
ܘܟܠ ܡܬܐ ܕܐ ܡܐܠܝ.
ܘܠܥܙܐ ܫܠܐ ܒܢܠܝ
ܘܠܫܩܐ ܚܛܐ ܫܥܐ ܙܒܝ.
ܘܟܠܐ ܕܐ ܡܐܒܝ. ܘܚܠܠ
ܕܐ ܡܐܚܙ. ܘܙܕ ܒܟ ܟܠ
ܡܟܡܐܒܐ ܕܐ ܡܐܟܡܙ. ܘܐܙܐ
ܒܟܝ ܘܙܐ ܒܡܥܫ ܫܥܐ
ܡܐܡܒܥ. ܘܚܫܐ ܫܠܐ
ܒܫܒܝ. ܘܐܙ ܟܠܐ ܕܐ ܫܥܝ
ܘܐܡܐܟܙܝ ܒܟ ܟܠܘ. ܐܫܐ
ܒܟܝ ܘܚܠ.

learn the truth from the cross itself?[176] For demons are put to flight by it, and all the sick are healed by it, and lepers are purified by it, and through it we walk on water, and through its power we may enter fire, and we drive away wicked beasts through its sign, and the unclean are cleansed by it, and brides are blessed by it, and, greater than all of these things, baptism is effected through it, and the mysteries of the body and blood of Christ are consecrated through its sign, and we receive priesthood through its power, and, in absolute summary, through it we are at ease and are guarded against all injuries of the body and soul.

ܘܐܟܠܝ ܒܢܫ ܡܠܟ
ܡܫܝܚܐ ܒܢ ܥܠ ܒܐ ܡܢ
ܫܡܝܐ ܒܝ ܥܠܡ ܒܐ ܡܐ
ܥܠ ܒܘܝ ܘܐܡܐ ܠܥܠ
ܐܐܟܠ ܡܠܟ ܘܐܡܐ ܠܥ
ܒܐ ܡܐ ܒܐ ܒܐ ܡܐ ܒܐ
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And we trust that on the day when Christ the king manifests himself from heaven the sign of his victory will precede him,[177] to the dishonour and shamed faces of the denying Jews[178] who crucified upon it Christ their Lord as an object of shame and scorn. But now it is a humiliation and a shaming of faces for themselves, so that whenever they look upon it they are put to shame and lament. For through its power the emperor Constantine also defeated all enemies who

176 For a very similar list of wonders performed by the Apostles through the cross, see the treatise on the cross published by Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita*, p. 591–592, and the Latin translation in van der Ploeg, "Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix" [see n. 163 above].

177 See Mt 24:30. This is greatly expanded in the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius* XIV.2–4.

178 There is very similar wording in the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius* XIV.4, although there the Jews are not singled out for attack.

ܥܡ ܗܘ ܕܠܐ ܣܓܕ ܠܗ ܐܦ ܠܨܠܒܐ ܘܠܐ ܚܙܐ ܒܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܥܠ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܝܬ ܗܘ ܡܢ ܚܝܐ. ܘܟܕ ܣܓܕܝܢ ܠܨܠܒܐ ܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܥܠ ܥܬ ܐܘ ܦܪܙܠ ܐܘ ܢܚܫܐ ܐܘ ܕܗܒܐ ܐܘ ܟܤܦܐ ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܥܠ ܡܪܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܫܪܐ ܒܗܝܟܠܐ ܡܢ ܠܢ ܘܩܝܡ ܒܗܢܐ ܕܢܨܚܐ.

warred against him.[179] And anyone who is a Christian and does not worship the cross, and does not gaze upon it as though on Christ, truly he is lost from life. And when we worship the cross, it is not as though we are worshipping the wood, or iron, or bronze, or gold, or silver, but we are worshipping our Lord, God the Word, who dwelt in the temple (received) from us,[180] and (dwells) in this sign of victory.[181]

[49] ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܡܣܠܡܐ ܐܦ ܗܠܝܢ ܡܠܝܢ ܥܠ ܨܠܒܐ ܣܓܝܐܝܢ ܗܢ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܗܟܝ ܡܦܫܩܝܢ ܐܢܬ ܠܢ. ܗܫܐ ܕܐܝ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܡܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܚܘܝܢ ܐܢܬ ܥܠ ܓܪܡܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܐܦ ܐܢ ܩܕܝܫܝܢ ܗܢ ܠܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܘܕܪܢܐ ܡܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܟܕ ܢܦܫܐ ܦܪܫܐ ܡܢ ܦܓܪܐ. [49] ܠܡܐ ܐܢܐ ܡܫܬܚܘܝ ܥܠ ܓܪܡܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ 273r | ܕܥܒܕ ܐܢܬ ܠܗܘܢ. ܗܫܐ ܐܝ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܕܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܕܐܦ ܐܢ ܩܕܝܫܝܢ ܗܢ ܠܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܘܕܪܢܐ ܡܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܟܕ ܢܦܫܐ ܦܪܫܐ ܡܢ ܦܓܪܐ.

[49] The Muslim says: These (words) about the cross are also sufficient, because you have (fully) elucidated them. But now, I ask you to tell me why you worship the bones | of martyrs, because I know for certain, that even though (the martyrs) be most righteous there is no aid through them once the soul departs from the body.

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**179** The story of Constantine's vision of the cross was well known to all early Christians, and turns up in many different Syriac texts. It is noteworthy, however, that a dramatic hymn on the subject was included in one of the main liturgical books of the Church of the East, the *Ḥudrā*: T. Darmo (ed.), *Kṭāḇā da-qḏām wa-ḏ-ḇātar wa-ḏ-ḥuḏrā wa-ḏ-kaškōl wa-ḏ-gazā w-qālā d-ʿuḏrānē ʿam kṭāḇā d-mazmōrē*, vol. III (Trichur, 1962), p. 726–733. For an English translation see S.P. Brock, "Two Syriac Poems on the Invention of the Cross", in N. el-Khoury, H. Crouzel, and R. Reinhardt (eds), *Lebendige Überlieferung: Prozesse der Annäherung und Auslegung. Festschrift für Hermann-Josef Vogt zum 60. Geburtstag* (Beirut / Ostfildern, 1992), p. 55–82 (esp. p. 70–82).

**180** That is, the human body: see Jn 2:21 (and § 22 above).

**181** For Christ's dwelling in the cross, see the treatise on the cross published by Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita. De perfectione religiosa*, p. 589–600, esp. p. 590, line 15; van der Ploeg, "Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix"; and the discussion in Reinink, "The veneration of icons, the cross, and the bones of the martyrs", p. 334.

[50] ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܡܢܝܚ ܕ[.]ܐܡܪ ܠܟܘܢ ܐܦ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܢܗܘܘܢ ܝܕܥܝܢ ܠܟܘܢ ܒܡܕܡ ܕܡܫܟܚܝܢ ܐܢܚܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܕܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢ ܐܝܟ ܐܢܘܢ ܕܢܘܢܐ ܒܝܡܐ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܠܗ ܟܠ ܐܝܟ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܟܠ ܒܪܝܬܐ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܘܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܘܣܡܝܟ ܗܘ ܒܟܠ ܐܢܫ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܕܚܠܝܢ ܒܗ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܥܒܕܝ ܨܒܝܢܗ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܥܒܕܝ ܨܒܝܢܗ ܐܦ ܒܟܠ ܐܢܫ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܘܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܡܬܟܢܫ ܘܡܬܚܒܪ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܕܚܠܝܢ ܒܗ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܥܒܕܝ ܨܒܝܢܗ ܡܫܬܟܚ ܠܢ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܡܬܚܒܪ ܠܢ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܘܡܬܚܒܪ ܠܢ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܕܚܠܝܢ ܒܗ ܘܒܐܢܫܝ ܕܥܒܕܝ ܨܒܝܢܗ ܡܫܬܟܚ ܠܢ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܡܬܚܒܪ ܠܢ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܡܬܚܒܪ ܘ

ܕܝܗܘܢ ܚܝܒ ܫܠܚ ܠܗ ܒܙܒܢ ܕܢܬܝܗܒ ܠܟ ܐܦ ܐܢܬ [ܕܝܠܟ][183] ܒܙܟܘܬ ܨܠܘܬܗ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܘܒܟ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܕܢܬܝܗܒ ܠܟ ܐܣܝܘܬܐ ܒܙܒܢ ܗܢܘܢ.

worship.[184] And you also (O son of Ishmael) anticipate that today, through the power of the prayers of the martyrs, He will bestow health on you on account of them.

ܘܐܝܟ ܕܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܡܬܟܠܝܢ ܘܡܦܠܓܝ ܒܥܕܢ ܕܥܠܠ ܠܘܬ ܡܠܟܐ ܐܢܘܢ ܠܐ ܥܠ ܦܬܚ ܒܠܚܘ ܠܥܠ ܡܢ ܕܒܥܐ ܠܗ ܐܠܐ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܡܠܟܐ ܡܢ ܚܕ ܥܡ ܐܢܫܐ ܐܠܝܢ ܐܢ ܠܐ ܒܨܠܘ ܡܢ ܚܒܝܒ ܡܠܟܐ ܐܘ ܡܢ ܦܬܚܐ ܕܒܝܬܗ ܡܠܟܐ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܕܡܢ

ܗܟܠ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢ ܒܐܦ ܥܠ ܦܘܪܣܐ ܕܠܐ ܒܪܫܘܬܐ ܠܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܠܐ ܢܣܒ ܐܠܐ ܐܦ ܐܒܕܢ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܢܦܫܬܗܘܢ. ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܟܕ ܨܒܝܢ ܠܡܒܥܐ ܘܒܨܠܘܬܐ ܕܢܥܠܘ ܩܕܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ ܗܫܐ ܒܛܝܫܘܬܐ ܘܠܐ ܒܠܐ ܚܟܡܬܐ ܐܠܐ ܩܕܡ ܡܫܪܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܕܗܢܘܢ ܢܒܝܐ ܘܫܠܝܚܐ ܘܩܕܝܫܐ ܣܗܕܐ.

if without permission they should yet enter with a petition, not only will they receive no benefit, but they will also attain loss | and damage for their person. So also, those who are wise in the household of God, when they wish their requests and prayers to enter in before God, they will not, then, present (them) to God rashly or in an unsophisticated manner, but first they petition the counsellors of the Heavenly King, who are the prophets and the apostles and the blessed martyrs.

ܘܒܟܠܗ ܐܦ ܟܠ ܦܘܠܚܢܢ ܕܥܒܕܝܢ ܠܘܬ ܨܠܡܐ ܐܘ ܠܘܬ ܨܠܒܐ ܐܘ ܠܘܬ ܡܣܬܘܪܐ ܕܚܣܝܢ ܒܗ ܕܗܘ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܪܗܘܢ ܕܗܘ ܠܗ ܡܣܓܕܝܢ ܐܢܚܢܢ ܘܒܨܠܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܬ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܒܝܬܗ ܡܩܪܒܝܢ ܐܢܚܢܢ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ.

And in brief, all of our worship, whether (directed) towards the icon or towards the cross, or the refuge in the martyrs to which we hold fast, it is Christ their Lord whom we worship, and through petition to the members of his household we make our offerings.

[51] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܫܐܠ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܚܕ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܒܟܠ ܐܬܪܐ ܐܝܬ ܐܢܬ ܡܫܒܩ ܠܟܠ ܐܬܪ̈ܐ ܐܚܪ̈ܢܐ ܘܠܡܕܝܢܚ ܠܬ ܠܡܕܝܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܚ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܐܬ ܡܫܬܚܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܗ ܐܠܐ ܠܡܕܝܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܚ ܥܕܢ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܦܪ̈ܕܝܣܐ ܕܥܕܢ ܒܪ̈ܝܫ ܐܬܪ̈ܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢ ܐܦ ܒܐܦ ܒܗ ܐܬܪ̈ܐ ܐܚܪ̈ܢܐ ܐܝܬ ܐܢ

ܐܬܥܕܢ ܒܗ. ܗܟܝ ܐܦ ܒܪܝܫ ܒܪ ܐܢ
ܕܢܫܬܐ. ܐܬܕܟܝܢ ܐܢܚܢ ܒܗ ܒܝܩܪ
ܐ ܒܫܘܠ ܐܦ ܒܝܩܪ ܕܡܢ ܒܗ. ܘܒܥ
ܐ ܚܠܒܐ ܠܗ ܒܝ ܫܒܚ ܒܫܒܬ.
ܘܠܗ ܒܗ ܡܗܝܡܢ. ܘܠܗ
ܗܟܝܠ ܐܦܡܬܝܡ ܐܠܗ.
ܕܠܗ ܒܗ ܐܦ ܕ[ܥ]
ܫܒ ܠܡܒܥ ܒܝ ܐ
ܐܦܠ ܡܠܟܢ ܡܬܥ. ܐܦ ܡܠܟ
ܗܟܝܠ ܠܡܒܥ ܐܬܠܟ ܠ
ܐܦ ܐ ܐܦ ܐ. ܘܐ ܐܦ ܐ ܒܗ
ܒܝ ܒܫ ܡܠܟ. ܚܦ ܒܠܟ
ܒܬܗ ܒܢ ܒܠ ܢܒ ܠܡܒܥ
ܗܟܝ. ܘܠܟ ܐܦ ܚܕ ܗ
ܐ ܒܫܬ ܒܥ[ܥ]. ܐ ܒ
ܐܦ ܐܬܕܟ ܐ ܘ ܒ
ܒܠ ܐ ܒܫ ܠܡܒܥ
ܗ. ܐ ܒ ܐ ܒ
ܒܐ ܐ.

East.[185] And in the beginning God placed us there in honour, and through our weakness we were cast out from our honour and from our exaltation. And now at every moment our eyes gaze out there, and for there we wait (in hope), and towards there we worship, and we offer a prayer that to there we might return. And Christ our Lord also prayed to the East,[186] and the holy apostles received from Him (the teaching of) worship to the East, and they passed (it) on to us thus. And see, (this is) a sure proof that they received it from our Lord, that all the churches on earth worship towards the East, and all Christians, those who believe in the Messiah, even if they differ in their confessions, which are seventy-two,[187] they worship towards the East, and proclaim the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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**185** The Hebrew text of Gen 2:8 states that the garden of Eden was planted *miqqedem*, and this was translated by the Septuagint as κατὰ ἀνατολὰς, "in the East". By contrast, the Peshiṭta translated it as ܡܢ ܩܕܡ, "from of old", and this was understood by Ephrem and Ishoʿdad of Merv, among others, as indicating that it was planted on the third day of creation, when the trees were created. The Septuagint interpretation, however, became well known to Syriac exegetes and theologians at a very early date, and so is often cited in their commentaries (see Ishoʿdad, ad loc.).

**186** In Mt 24:27 Jesus states that the (second) coming of the Son of Man will be like the lightning that comes from the East, and this is the most common justification for Christian prayer towards the East. There are no obvious Gospel passages in which Jesus himself is said to pray towards the East.

**187** See Lk 10:1, where some Greek witnesses and the Old Syriac Gospels (plus the Diatessaron, Ephrem, Acts of Thomas, Doctrina Addai etc.) read "seventy-two" apostles, and the majority of the Greek witnesses and the Peshitta read "seventy". A famous ḥadīth also refers to the seventy-two sects of the Christians (and seventy-one of the Jews, and seventy-three of the Muslims); see W.M. Watt, "The Great Community and the Sects", in G. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Theology and Law in Islam* (Wiesbaden, 1971), p. 25–36.

ܘܐܟ ܒܝ ܟܬܒ̈ܐ ܡܫܝ ܐܬ ܠܟ
ܐܩܪܒ ܕܟܬ ܡܬܬܒ. ܘܐ ܟܐ
ܐܐ ܕܒܝ ܐܦ ܕܡܥܒܪ ܘܥܐ
ܕܡܟܡܝ ܡܘ ܡܥܐ ܟܠ ܗܕܐ
ܕܡܒܫܐ. ܚܕ ܐܡܪ. ܕܡܕܐ ܕܡܥܕܢ
ܟܢܟ ܡܢܟܡ ܚܦ. ܐܡܫܢܗ. ܘܐܟ
274r| ܚܩܐ ܡܟܩܐ ܕܢܗ ܐܡܫ
ܡܡ ܡܡܕ. ܟܟܐ ܕܡܒܫ. ܟܕܡ
ܡܡ. ܘܐܟ ܠܗܥܐ ܕܡܐ. ܒܝ
ܡܒܫ ܡܒ ܡܟܐ ܡܟ ܟܥܐ.

And also from the Old (Testament) I will show you proofs that are most trustworthy. And if you wish, from that (passage) concerning the tabernacle which Moses commanded (to be placed) at the east gate,[188] saying: "The lord of the camp shall go in and out by it perpetually",[189] and also the priests and the levites who | were honoured were dwelling at the east side.[190] And (so) also the blessed David: "From the East He gave voice, a mighty voice".[191]

[53] ܠܫܐ ܐܡܙ[.] ܟܙܙܐ
ܫܒܗܐ. ܟܙܐ ܐܟܐ ܠܗܟܟ.
ܐܒ ܕܐܥܟ ܙܐ. ܘܐܟ ܡܗܫܒ
ܥܟܐ ܕܒܟ ܐܒܙ. ܟܟ ܗܥܬ
ܟܗܫܐ ܡܟܙܬ ܟܠܗܐ.
ܕܟܠܟܗܐ ܡܗܟܗܫ.
ܡܟܙܐܐ ܕܟܡܟܐ ܕܟ.
ܒܐ ܕܗܫܐ ܫܒܟ. ܐܫܒ ܟܐ
ܟܐܗ. ܐܟ ܟܐܐ ܕܐܟ ܫܒ
ܐܟ ܟܡ ܕܟ ܕܡܟܟ. ܐ ܟ
ܟܟܐ ܕܟܡܒܟ ܕܐܡܙܐ. ܐ ܟܐ
ܐܟ. ܐܟ ܟܐܐ ܕܐܟ ܫܒ[192]

[53] The Muslim says: Truly you possess the truth, and it is no error, as (some) people have supposed! And Muḥammad our prophet also said: "As for those who live in monasteries, and those who dwell on the mountains, they will enjoy the kingdom".[193] And truly, everyone who holds to your belief with this way of thinking, as you have repeated (it) before me, and is cleansed from iniquity and sin, God will not reject him. However, whilst I accept the truth of everything that you have said, (and) even though I have

188 See Ex 27:13–15.
189 This appears not to be a biblical citation. See Ex 33:7–8.
190 See Num 3:38.
191 Ps 68:34.
192 The scribe originally wrote this and the previous word in the reverse order, but then indicated the correct order with superscript ܐ and ܒ.
193 See Q 5:82.

ܚܠܗ ܥܕܙ. ܕܒܠ ܚܠܫ ܕܒܠܟ[.] ܫܝ ܥܡܐ ܘܥܕܙ ܐܡܙ ܐ ܠܟ.

greatly wearied you, yet I wish to learn the whole truth from you concerning all the particularities. (So) answer me one small question.

[54] ܫܝܕ ܐܡܙ[.] ܡܢ ܥܡܐ ܠܟ[.]

[54] The Monk says: What is your question?

[55] ܦܫܝ ܐܡܙ[.] ܚܝ ܢܕܒ ܐ ܕܐ ܕܥܩܕ ܙ ܕܐ ܟ. ܙ ܕܫ ܡ ܐ ܕ ܒ ܐ ܕ ܡ ܐ ܕ ܒ ܐ ܕ ܡ ܐ ܕ ܒ ܐ ܕ

ܘܒܥܕܝܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܝܢ ܥܠ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܐܦ ܗܢܘܢ ܗܘܘ ܥܡܐ ܪܒܐ ܘܒܥܝܢ ܗܘ ܕܢܗܘܘܢ ܒܥܒܕܐ ܒܝܕ ܡܨܪܝܐ ܐܪܒܥ ܡܐܐ ܫܢܝܢ. ܘܟܕ ܐܬܫܒܝܘ ܒܝܕ ܢܒܘܟܕܢܨܪ ܦܠܚܘ ܒܫܥܒܕ ܒܒܒܠ ܫܒܥܝܢ ܫܢܝܢ. ܘܐܬܝܗܒ ܗܘ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܢܗܘܘ ܒܝܕ ܐܬܘܪܝܐ.

years,[199] and (then) you were driven away by Gideon the Hebrew, and he killed four of your kings,[200] ʿŌrib, Zīb, Zābaḥ, and Ṣalmanaʿ.[201] And the children of Israel also, even though they were a mighty people, yet they were enslaved by the Egyptians for four hundred years.[202] (And) when they were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar they served in bondage in Babylon for seventy years.[203] And they were (also) delivered into the hand of the Assyrians.[204]

ܐܦ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܫܡܥܐܝܠ ܠܐ ܝܗܒ ܠܟܘܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܥܠܝܢ ܒܙܕܝܩܘܬܟܘܢ ܐܠܐ ܒܚܛܗܝܢ ܕܝܠܢ ܘܒܓܠ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܪܚܡ ܠܢ ܘܠܐ ܨܒܐ ܠܡܫܒܩܢ ܡܢ ܡܠܟܘܬܗ. ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܫ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܪܚܡ ܠܗ ܘܡܟܫܝ ܠܗ ܕܢܬܝܣܪ ܒܪ ܕܠܐ ܬܗܘܐ ܠܟ ܒܢ ܐܠܐ ܐܢ 

ܐܠܗܐ ܛܒܐ ܘܪܚܡܢܐ ܨܒܐ ܕܢܐܠܦ ܠܢ ܒܗܕܐ ܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܒܪ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܩܝܡ ܕܒܗ ܢܗܘܐ ܠܢ ܚܝܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ ܥܠܡܝܢ.

The good and merciful God desired to chastise us in this passing world of brief and fleeting life so that there (in His kingdom) He might cause us to inherit eternal life.

[57] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܣܠܡܐ [.] ܐܢܐ ܐܡܪܬ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܕܟܠ ܡܕܥ ܐܢܬ ܕܫܪܪܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܘܠܐ ܬܣܒܪ ܦܢܝ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܢܐ ܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܬ ܪܚܡ ܠܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܢ ܢܦܫܟ ܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܗܠ ܒܢܝ ܗܓܪ ܢܥܠܘܢ ܠܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܐܘ ܠܐ ܐܡ ܠܐ.

[57] The Muslim says: I said to you from the start that whatever you know to be true, tell me, and do not have regard for my status. And now I adjure you by Christ – for I know that you love Him better than your own life – tell me the truth in as much as you know (it): Will the sons of Hagar[207] enter the kingdom, or not?

[58] ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܪܗܒܐ [.] ܐܢܬ ܕܐܫܬܒܥܬ ܒܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܒܗ ܐܡܝܬ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܫܡܥ ܡܢ ܦܘܡܗ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܡܪܝ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܒܫܥܬ ܡܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܒܣܒܪܬܐ ܕܐܢܫ ܕܠܐ ܐܬܝܠܕ ܡܢ ܠܥܠ ܠܐ ܢܚܙܐ ܠܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܢܩܘܕܝܡܘܣ ܐܝܟ ܢܬܝܠܕ ܐܢܫ ܣܒ ܘܗܘ ܠܒܛܢ ܐܡܗ ܬܪܬܝܢ ܘܢܬܝܠܕ. ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܝܫܘܥ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ ܢܬܝܠܕ ܡܢ ܡܝܐ ܘܪܘܚܐ ܘܠܐ ܢܥܠ ܠܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܐܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܒܕܝܢ ܛܒܝܢ ܠܡܪܗ

[58] The Monk says: By Christ through whom you have adjured me, hear (the words) from His holy mouth as He speaks in the Gospel of the blessed John: "'Anyone who is not born again shall not see the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus says to Him, 'How can an old man be born again? Is he able to enter his mother's womb again for a second time and be born?' Jesus says to him, 'Truly, truly I say to you, that anyone who is not born of water and the Spirit shall not enter the kingdom of God'".[208] But if there should be someone who has fine deeds (to his

**207** The mother of Ishmael according to the Bible (see Gen 16:15), and some post-Qurʾānic Islamic traditions. The Muslims were called "hagarenes" by Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christians from an early date, but it would be surprising indeed if a real Muslim would have used this as a label for his fellow believers.

**208** Jn 3:3–5. The passage is generally understood to refer to baptism.

ܐܦ ܒܢܐ ܠܗ ܚܛܝܢ ܚܫܒܢ ܡܢ
ܟܠܗܘ ܕܢܩܢ ܒܕܫܡܝܢ ܒܡ
ܐܥܠܡܢ. ܚܕܐ ܫܥܝܪ ܠܗ ܐܝ
ܒܟܬܒ: ܐܠܐ ܐܝ ܚܕ[.]

credit), he may live through grace in (those) mansions[209] which are far removed from the torment, but he shall be considered as a hired hand, and not as a son (and heir).[210]

[59] ܟܠܡܢ ܐܡܪ ܐܢ[.] ܐܢ ܗܘܐ ܐܢ
ܒܒ ܠܐ ܒܡ ܒܣܠܛܢ ܒܥܠܟܢ[211].
ܐܢܫܐ ܒܡ ܚܬܥܢ. ܩܠܝܠ
ܐܢ ܐܢ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܚܕܗܠܝܢ. ܐܠ
ܚܕܝ ܐܢ ܠܟ ܒܒ ܐܠܗܐ
ܐܣܬܝ. ܚܢܢܐ ܐܢܢ[.]

[59] The Muslim says: I testify that if it were not for fear of the government, and public shame, many would become Christians. But as for you, may you be blessed by God, for you have given me great ease through your speech with me.

[60] ܡܫܝܚܝ ܐܡܪ[.] ܠܗ ܕܟܠ
ܐܢ ܐܢ ܐܢ ܚܕ ܐ ܐܢ
ܐܥܠܡ[ܗ] ܠܗ ܒܡ ܩܡܫܝ.

[60] The Monk says: To Him from whom is everything, and in whom is everything, and through whom is everything,

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**209** This response is built upon Christ's words in Jn 14:2, "In my Father's house there are many mansions". According to Ephrem, "in the delightful mansions which are at the fences (of Paradise) / do the souls of the just and righteous reside", /ܐܢ ܐܢ ܐܢ

ܘܡܢ ܦܓܪ̈ܐ ܘܡܢ ܣܠ̈ܡܐ ܕܫܒܚ̈ܘ ܠܗ ܘܡܢ ܥܒ̈ܕܗ ܕܐܝܬ ܒ[ܗ] ܕܫܒ̈ܚ ܠܗ. ܫܒ̈ܚܬܐ ܠܫܡܗ ܘܥܠܝܢ ܢܗܘܐ ܚܘܣܗ ܘܪ[ܚ]ܡ̈ܘܗܝ ܠܥ̈ܠܡ ܥ̈ܠܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ.

to Him be praise from spiritual beings and corporeal beings and from my feeble self who have proclaimed Him! Glory be to His name, and on us be His mercy and His grace, for ever and ever, amen.